

114TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To update the financial disclosure requirements for judges of the District of Columbia courts, and to make other improvements to the District of Columbia courts.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. LANKFORD (for himself, Mr. CARPER, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. BOOKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To update the financial disclosure requirements for judges of the District of Columbia courts, and to make other improvements to the District of Columbia courts.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “District of Columbia  
5 Judicial Financial Transparency Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR**  
2 **JUDGES OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS.**

3 (a) REQUIREMENTS DESCRIBED.—Section 11–1530,  
4 District of Columbia Official Code, is amended to read as  
5 follows:

6 **“§ 11–1530. Financial statements**

7 “(a) Pursuant to such rules as the Commission shall  
8 promulgate, each judge of the District of Columbia courts  
9 shall, within one year following the date of enactment of  
10 the District of Columbia Court Reorganization Act of  
11 1970 and at least annually thereafter, file with the Com-  
12 mission a report containing the following information:

13 “(1)(A) The source, type and amount of the  
14 judge’s income which exceeds \$200 (other than in-  
15 come from the United States government and in-  
16 come referred to in subparagraph (C)) for the period  
17 covered by the report.

18 “(B) The source and type of the judge’s  
19 spouse’s income which exceeds \$1,000 (other than  
20 income from the United States government and in-  
21 come referred to in subparagraph (C)) for the period  
22 covered by the report.

23 “(C) The source and type of income which con-  
24 sists of dividends, rents, interest, and capital gains  
25 received by the judge and the judge’s spouse during  
26 such period which exceeds \$200 in amount or value,

1 and an indication of which of the following cat-  
2 egories the amount or value of such item of income  
3 is within—

4 “(i) not more than \$1,000,

5 “(ii) greater than 1,000 but not more than  
6 \$2,500,

7 “(iii) greater than \$2,500 but not more  
8 than \$5,000,

9 “(iv) greater than \$5,000 but not more  
10 than \$15,000,

11 “(v) greater than \$15,000 but not more  
12 than \$50,000,

13 “(vi) greater than \$50,000 but not more  
14 than \$100,000,

15 “(vii) greater than \$100,000 but not more  
16 than \$1,000,000,

17 “(viii) greater than \$1,000,000 but not  
18 more than \$5,000,000, or

19 “(ix) greater than \$5,000,000.

20 “(2) The name and address of each private  
21 foundation or eleemosynary institution, and of each  
22 business or professional corporation, firm, or enter-  
23 prise in which the judge was an officer, director,  
24 proprietor, or partner during such period.

1           “(3) The identity and category of value (as set  
2           forth in subsection (b)) of each liability of \$10,000  
3           or more owed by the judge or by the judge and the  
4           judge’s spouse jointly at any time during such pe-  
5           riod.

6           “(4) The source and value of all gifts in the ag-  
7           gregate amount or value of \$250 or more from any  
8           single source received by the judge during such pe-  
9           riod, except gifts from the judge’s spouse or any of  
10          the judge’s children or parents.

11          “(5) The identity of each trust in which the  
12          judge held a beneficial interest having a value of  
13          \$10,000 or more at any time during such period,  
14          and in the case of any trust in which the judge held  
15          any beneficial interest during such period, the iden-  
16          tity, if known, of each interest in real or personal  
17          property in which the trust held a beneficial interest  
18          having a value of \$10,000 or more at any time dur-  
19          ing such period. If the judge cannot obtain the iden-  
20          tity of the trust interest, the judge shall request the  
21          trustee to report that information to the Commis-  
22          sion.

23          “(6) The identity and category of value (as set  
24          forth in subsection (b)) of each interest in real or  
25          personal property having a value of \$10,000 or more

1       which the judge owned at any time during such pe-  
2       riod.

3           “(7) The amount or value and source of each  
4       honorarium of \$250 or more received by the judge  
5       and the judge’s spouse during such period.

6           “(8) The source and amount of all money, other  
7       than that received from the United States govern-  
8       ment, received in the form of an expense account or  
9       as reimbursement for expenditures from any source  
10      aggregating more than \$250 during such period.

11          “(9) The source and amount of all waivers or  
12      partial waivers of fees or charges accepted by the  
13      judge on behalf of the judge or the judge’s spouse,  
14      domestic partner, or guest during such period.

15          “(b) For purposes of paragraphs (3) and (6) of sub-  
16      section (a), the categories of value set forth in this sub-  
17      section are—

18           “(1) not more than \$15,000;

19           “(2) greater than \$15,000 but not more than  
20      \$50,000;

21           “(3) greater than \$50,000 but not more than  
22      \$100,000;

23           “(4) greater than \$100,000 but not more than  
24      \$250,000;

1           “(5) greater than \$250,000 but not more than  
2           \$500,000;

3           “(6) greater than \$500,000 but not more than  
4           \$1,000,000;

5           “(7) greater than \$1,000,000 but not more  
6           than \$5,000,000;

7           “(8) greater than \$5,000,000 but not more  
8           than \$25,000,000;

9           “(9) greater than \$25,000,000 but not more  
10          than \$50,000,000; and

11          “(10) greater than \$50,000,000.

12          “(c)(1) Reports filed pursuant to this section shall,  
13 upon written request, and notice to the reporting judge  
14 for purposes of making an application to the Commission  
15 for a redaction pursuant to paragraph (2), be made avail-  
16 able for public inspection and copying within a reasonable  
17 time after filing and during the period they are kept by  
18 the Commission (in accordance with rules promulgated by  
19 the Commission), and shall be kept by the Commission  
20 for not less than three years.

21          “(2) This section does not require the public avail-  
22 ability of reports filed by a judge if upon application by  
23 the reporting judge, a finding is made by the Commission  
24 that revealing personal and sensitive information could en-  
25 danger that judge or a family member of that judge, ex-

1 cept that a report may be redacted pursuant to this para-  
2 graph only—

3 “(A) to the extent necessary to protect the indi-  
4 vidual who filed the report or a family member of  
5 that individual; and

6 “(B) for as long as the danger to such indi-  
7 vidual exists.

8 “(d) The intentional failure by a judge of a District  
9 of Columbia court to file a report required by this section,  
10 or the filing of a fraudulent report, shall constitute willful  
11 misconduct in office and shall be grounds for removal from  
12 office under section 11–1526(a)(2).”.

13 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by  
14 subsection (a) shall apply with respect to reports filed  
15 under section 11–1530, District of Columbia Official  
16 Code, that cover periods beginning during or after 2016.

17 **SEC. 3. AUTHORITY OF PROBATE DIVISION TO USE MAG-**  
18 **ISTRATE JUDGES.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 11–1732(j)(5), District of  
20 Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking “Family  
21 Divisions” and inserting “Probate Divisions, and the  
22 Family Court,”.

23 (b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—  
24 Section 11–1732(j)(4)(A), District of Columbia Official

1 Code, is amended by striking “Family Division” and in-  
2 serting “Family Court”.

3 **SEC. 4. AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS TO**  
4 **ACCEPT CERTAIN TYPES OF PAYMENTS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 17 of  
6 title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding  
7 at the end the following:

8 **“§ 11-1748. Authority of courts to accept certain**  
9 **types of payments**

10 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the term ‘elec-  
11 tronic funds transfer’—

12 “(1) means a transfer of funds, other than a  
13 transaction by check, draft, or similar paper instru-  
14 ment, that is initiated through an electronic ter-  
15 minal, telephone, or computer or magnetic tape for  
16 the purpose of ordering, instructing, or authorizing  
17 a financial institution to debit or credit an account;  
18 and

19 “(2) includes point of sale transfers, automated  
20 teller machine transfers, direct deposit or withdrawal  
21 of funds, transfers initiated by telephone, and trans-  
22 fers resulting from debit card transactions.

23 “(b) AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT CREDIT CARD PAY-  
24 MENTS AND ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFERS.—



1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The District of Columbia  
2 courts may accept payment of fines, fees, escrow  
3 payments, restitution, bonds, and other payments to  
4 the courts by credit card or electronic funds trans-  
5 fer.

6           “(2) USE OF VENDORS AND THIRD PARTY PRO-  
7 VIDERS.—The Executive officer—

8           “(A) may contract with a bank or credit  
9 card vendor, or other third party provider, for  
10 purposes of accepting payments by credit card  
11 or electronic funds transfer; and

12           “(B) shall make every effort to find the  
13 lowest cost vendor for purposes of accepting  
14 such payments.

15           “(3) RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAYING FEES.—  
16 Under any contract entered into under paragraph  
17 (2), the person making the payment shall be respon-  
18 sible for covering any fee or charge associated or im-  
19 posed with respect to the method of payment.

20           “(4) COMPLETION OF PAYMENT.—If a person  
21 elects to make a payment to the District of Colum-  
22 bia courts by a method authorized under paragraph  
23 (1), the payment shall not be deemed to be made  
24 until the courts receive the funds.

25           “(c) AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT CHECKS.—

1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The District of Columbia  
2 courts may accept payment of fines, fees, escrow  
3 payments, restitution, bonds, and other payments to  
4 the courts by check.

5           “(2) USE OF CHECK GUARANTEE VENDOR.—  
6 The Executive Officer—

7           “(A) may contract with a check guarantee  
8 vendor for purposes of accepting payments by  
9 check; and

10           “(B) shall make every effort to find the  
11 lowest cost vendor for purposes of accepting  
12 such payments.

13           “(3) RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAYING FEES.—  
14 Under any contract entered into under paragraph  
15 (2), the person making the payment by check shall  
16 be responsible for covering any fee or charge associ-  
17 ated or imposed with respect to the method of pay-  
18 ment.

19           “(d) LIABILITY FOR NON-PAYMENT.—If a check or  
20 other method of payment, including payment by credit  
21 card, debit card, or charge card, so received is not duly  
22 paid, or is paid and subsequently charged back to the Dis-  
23 trict of Columbia courts, the person by whom such check  
24 or other method of payment has been tendered shall re-  
25 main liable for the payment, to the same extent as if such

1 check or other method of payment had not been ten-  
2 dered.”.

3 (b) **TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—

4 The table of sections for subchapter III of chapter 17 of  
5 title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding  
6 at the end the following:

“11–1748. Authority of courts to accept certain types of payments.”.

7 **SEC. 5. INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT IN CONTROVERSY**

8 **PERMITTED FOR CASES UNDER JURISDIC-**

9 **TION OF SMALL CLAIMS AND CONCILIATION**

10 **BRANCH OF SUPERIOR COURT.**

11 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 11–1321, District of Co-  
12 lumbia Official Code, is amended by striking “\$5,000”  
13 and inserting “\$10,000”.

14 (b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by  
15 subsection (a) shall apply to any case filed in the Superior  
16 Court of the District of Columbia on or after the date of  
17 enactment of this Act.

18 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO APPROVE COMPENSATION OF AT-**

19 **TORNEYS IN EXCESS OF MAXIMUM AMOUNT.**

20 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 11–2604(c), District of  
21 Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking the last  
22 sentence and inserting “The chief judge may delegate such  
23 approval authority to an active or senior judge.”.

24 (b) **EFFECTIVE DATE .**—The amendment made by  
25 subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any case or pro-

1 ceeding initiated on or after the date of enactment of this  
2 Act.