**South Carolina General Assembly**

121st Session, 2015-2016

**S. 111**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

Joint Resolution

Sponsors: Senator Bright

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Companion/Similar bill(s): 3123

Introduced in the Senate on January 13, 2015

Currently residing in the Senate Committee on **Judiciary**

Summary: Elections of Judges

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

12/3/2014 Senate Prefiled

12/3/2014 Senate Referred to Committee on **Judiciary**

1/13/2015 Senate Introduced and read first time ([Senate Journal‑page 85](file:///h:\SJ%20Archive\2015\01-13-15.docx))

1/13/2015 Senate Referred to Committee on **Judiciary** ([Senate Journal‑page 85](file:///h:\SJ%20Archive\2015\01-13-15.docx))

View the latest [legislative information](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=111&session=121&summary=B) at the website

**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[12/3/2014](file:///p:\pprever\2015-16\111_20141203.docx)

**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO AMEND TITLE V OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1895, RELATING TO THE JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT, TO PROVIDE THAT SUPREME COURT JUSTICES, JUDGES ON THE COURT OF APPEALS, AND CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES SHALL BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THE SENATE RATHER THAN ELECTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND TO REPEAL PROVISIONS REQUIRING THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ESTABLISH A JUDICIAL MERIT SCREENING COMMISSION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. A. It is proposed that Section 3, Title V of the Constitution be amended to read:

“Section 3. The members of the Supreme Court shall be ~~elected by a joint public vote of the General Assembly~~ appointed by the Governor, upon the advice and consent of the Senate, for a term of ten years, and shall continue in office until their successors shall be ~~elected and qualified~~ appointed and confirmed, and shall be classified so that the term of one of them shall expire every two years. ~~In any contested election, the vote of each member of the General Assembly present and voting shall be recorded.~~”

B. It is proposed that Section 9, Title V of the Constitution be amended to read:

“Section 9. The members of the Court of Appeals shall be ~~elected by a joint public vote of the General Assembly~~ appointed by the Governor upon the advice and consent of the Senate for a term of six years and shall continue in office until their successors shall be ~~elected and qualify~~ appointed and confirmed. ~~In any contested election, the vote of each member of the General Assembly present and voting shall be recorded. Provided, that for the first election of members of the Court of Appeals, the General Assembly shall by law provide for staggered terms.~~”

C. It is proposed that Section 13, Title V of the Constitution be amended to read:

“Section 13. The General Assembly shall divide the State into judicial circuits of compact and contiguous territory. For each circuit a judge or judges shall be ~~elected by a joint public vote of the General Assembly; provided, that in any contested election, the vote of each member of the General Assembly present and voting shall be recorded. He~~ appointed by the Governor, upon the advice and consent of the Senate. A circuit court judge shall hold office for a term of six years, and at the time of his ~~election~~ appointment he shall be an elector of a county of, and during his continuance in office he shall reside in, the circuit of which he is judge.

The General Assembly may by law provide for additional circuit judges, to be assigned by the Chief Justice. Such additional circuit judges shall be ~~elected~~ appointed in the same manner and for the same term as provided in the preceding paragraph of this section for other circuit judges, except that residence in a particular county or circuit shall not be a qualification for office.”

D. It is proposed that Section 18, Title V of the Constitution be amended to read:

“Section 18. All vacancies in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, or Circuit Court shall be filled by ~~elections as prescribed in Sections 3, 8, and 13 of this article; provided, that if the unexpired term does not exceed one year such vacancy may be filled by~~ the Governor upon the advice and consent of the Senate. When a vacancy is filled ~~by either appointment or election~~, the incumbent shall hold office only for the unexpired term of his predecessor.”

E. It is proposed that Section 27, Title V of the Constitution, relating to the Judicial Merit Screening Commission, be repealed.

SECTION 2. The proposed amendments in Section 1 must be submitted to the qualified electors at the next general election for representatives. Ballots must be provided at the various voting precincts with the following words printed or written on the ballot:

“Must Title V of the 1895 Constitution, relating to the Judicial Department, be amended to provide that Supreme Court Justices, judges on the Court of Appeals, and Circuit Court judges must be appointed by the Governor upon the advice and consent of the Senate rather than being elected by the General Assembly and to repeal provisions requiring the General Assembly to establish a Judicial Merit Screening Commission?

Yes 

No 

Those voting in favor of the question shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the word ‘Yes’ and those voting against the question shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the word ‘No’.”

SECTION 3. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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