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Jurisdiction of General Sessions Court

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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The jurisdictional limit of the general sessions court is \$25,000 in all civil cases in all counties, except in cases of forcible entry and detainer, where the court has unlimited original jurisdiction, including jurisdiction to award an alternative money judgment. Also, the general sessions court judges have jurisdiction to issue restraining orders and enforce penalty provisions for violation of these restraining orders. T.C.A. § 16-15-501. Attorney's fees, court costs and discretionary costs are not included in the calculation of whether a judgment entered by the general sessions court exceeds these monetary jurisdictional limits. T.C.A. §§ 16-15-501, 29-30-102. The court has jurisdiction to try misdemeanor cases and may issue sentences within the limits provided by law for the particular offense. T.C.A. § 40-1-109. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 40-11-204, general sessions judges also hear petitions for relief on forfeited recognizances.

In many counties, the general sessions court may have, by private or public act, other subject matter jurisdiction, including probate, domestic relations, and Workers' compensation. See T.C.A. §§ 16-15-401, 40-6-214 (arrest warrants), 27-8-105 (certiorari), 17-2-209 (divorce interchange), 17-2-208 (interchange), and private acts relative to jurisdiction in the various counties.

Civil cases, originating in general sessions court and appealed to a higher court, shall not be dismissed for informalities, but shall be tried on the merits of the case. The higher court shall allow all amendments in the form of the action, the parties in the case, or the statement of the cause of action when necessary to reach the merits. The trial, including damages awarded, is de novo. T.C.A. § 16-15-729.

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