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General Sessions Court

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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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General Sessions Court

Private Acts of 1939 Chapter 390

SECTION 1. That there is hereby created and established a court in and for Trousdale County, Tennessee, which shall be designated Court of General Sessions of Trousdale County, Tennessee. Said county shall provide a court room at Hartsville, dockets, furnishings and necessary supplies for the equipment and maintenance of said court, and pay for same out of the ordinary funds of said county.

SECTION 2. That the Court of General Sessions is hereby vested with all the jurisdiction and shall exercise the authority conferred by the Legislature upon Justices of the Peace in Civil and Criminal cases, suits and actions; and the Justices of the Peace of said county are hereby divested all such jurisdiction and authority, but any Justice of the Peace elected for any district except the district in which Hartsville is situated, may issue criminal and search warrants against and accept appearance bonds from any person charged with an offense committed in the district for which such Justice of the Peace was elected, and may issue civil process on any cause of action heretofore triable in his district, such warrants and process to be returnable to and triable by said Court of General Sessions. The authority of said Justices of the Peace in their capacity as members of the Quarterly Court or in the performance of the rites of matrimony is in no wise affected by this Act.

SECTION 3. That before the issuance of any warrant in a civil case, the plaintiff shall secure the costs by executing a cost bond with good security in the sum of \$25.00, or by making a cash cost deposit of not less than \$2.50 or more than \$25.00, or shall take the oath prescribed for poor persons, and on motion, the Court may increase the amount of such bond or deposit.

SECTION 4. That the rules of pleading and practice, forms of writs and process, stay of and appeals from judgments in civil cases of said Court shall be same as of Justices of the Peace, except no appeal shall be granted from a judgment dismissing a suit or judgment which does not exceed the amount of \$50.00, exclusive of interest and cost; however, a new trial of said excepted cases may be had and with as full rights as if on appeal to the Circuit Court, provided a petition for a writ of certiorari showing merit and sworn to has been filed with the Circuit Court within ten days from the date of the judgment complained of, and the writ has been granted. No execution shall issue during said period of ten days unless said writ has been previously denied.

SECTION 5. That in all matters the costs and fees of said Court of General Sessions shall be the same as those provided by law for Justices of the Peace. The fees and other compensation of the sheriff, his deputies, constables, Game Wardens and State Highway Patrolmen, Game Wardens and other officers, for services to said court, and the fines and forfeitures adjudged by it shall be handled, accounted for and disbursed as required by law.

SECTION 6. That separate dockets shall be kept in said court for Civil and Criminal cases. Upon the civil docket shall be entered the style of each case, the date of issuance of the warrant or process, and the return of the process, in brief form, action of the court on the case, both interlocutory and final orders, judgments, executions, garnishments, lists of the fees of the court, the Sheriff, his deputies, Constables, Game Wardens and State Highway Patrolmen for their services, fees of witnesses for attendance et cetera, and credits for payments upon the judgment and upon the costs. All cases shall be indexed and the dockets shall be substantially in the form of those of Justices of the Peace. The Criminal Docket shall be kept in like manner.

SECTION 7. That there shall be one Judge for said Court, with the same qualifications as provided by the constitution of the State of Tennessee for Judges of inferior courts, and the oath and terms of office of said Judge shall be the same as that prescribed for circuit judges and chancellors.

As amended by: Private Acts of 1945, Chapter 10

SECTION 8. That the compensation of said judge shall be Nine Hundred (\$900.00) Dollars per annum, payable in equal monthly installments, on the first day of each month. It shall be paid out of the ordinary funds of the county, and shall not be increased or diminished during the time for which said Judge is elected. Said Judge may practice his profession in the other courts of the State so long as it does not interfere with his duties as Judge of the Court of General Sessions. Provided, further, however, he shall not give advice nor render any legal services in connection with any matter coming within the jurisdiction of his Court.

SECTION 9. That for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act L. E. McKlusky is hereby appointed Judge of the Court of General Sessions for Trousdale County, Tennessee, to serve until the regular election in August, 1940, and until his successor has been elected and qualified. His successor

shall be elected by the qualified voters of the county at the election for judicial and other civil officers on the first Thursday of August, 1940, and shall hold said office from the 1st day of September, 1940, until the 1st day of September, 1942, or until his successor is qualified. His successor shall be elected every eight years at such election for the term provided by law for judges of inferior courts.

SECTION 10. That if the Judge of said court fails to attend, cannot preside in a pending cause, or for any reason hold court, a majority of the attorneys present in such court may elect one of their number, who has the qualifications of such a judge, and when elected shall have the same authority as a regular judge to hold the court for the occasion.

SECTION 11. That in the case of a vacancy for any cause the Governor shall have the power to appoint some qualified person to fill such vacancy.

SECTION 12. That the Clerk of the Circuit and Criminal Courts of said county shall act as Clerk of said Court of General Sessions, and when acting as Clerk of said court, shall be designated "Clerk of Court of General Sessions of Trousdale County". The fees, commissions and emoluments of said Court of General Sessions shall accrue to said county. The Clerk of said court shall receive as compensation for his services the sum of Six Hundred (\$600.00) Dollars per annum payable in equal monthly installments, on the first of each month, out of the ordinary funds of said county, and shall pay to said county monthly all fees, commissions and emoluments of said Court of General Sessions.

While receiving compensation for acting as Clerk of this Court of General Sessions the clerk shall receive no compensation for services rendered in any other Court by reason of judgment over cases arising in this Court of General Sessions; and should any such compensation by this Section excluded be paid said Clerk the county chairman issuing warrant for same shall be personally liable to the county for the amount thereof. Provided, further, that the books and records of the Clerk of the Court of General Sessions of Trousdale County shall be audited by the County Audit Commission quarterly and a detailed report made to the County Court at each quarterly session of said County Court.

The Clerk of said Court and his deputies shall have concurrent authority with the judge to issue warrants and other processes and writs, other than those which the law requires shall be issued only by a judicial officer.

As amended by: Private Acts of 1947, Chapter 464

SECTION 13. That the Sheriff of said county, or any deputy sheriff or constable thereof, shall serve legal processes, writs and papers issued by said court with the same authority as provided by law in the other inferior courts.

SECTION 14. That this Act shall in no wise impair the right, title or interest of any Justice of the Peace of said county to any unpaid fees, or funds in which he had a right or interest in any proceedings, judgment or suit, whether said cause is disposed of or pending when this Act becomes effective.

SECTION 15. That all of the official dockets, records and papers in cases that are undisposed of or pending in the offices of Justices of the Peace of said county at the time this Act become effective shall be delivered to said Court of General Sessions. The official dockets, records and papers in possession of Justices of the Peace of said county in cases which have been completed shall be turned over to said county, as provided by law.

SECTION 16. That said court shall have authority to hear and determine all undisposed of cases arising in the Courts of Justices of the Peace of said county as if such cases had originated in said Court of General Sessions.

SECTION 17. That the Judge of the Court of General Sessions of Trousdale County is hereby given inquisitorial powers in all misdemeanor cases and shall have the authority to go into the facts of all cases brought before him and upon investigation thereof, if, in his opinion, the facts are not sufficient to convict, he shall have the authority to dispose of the same. The Judge of said Court is hereby vested with and shall have interchangeable and concurrent jurisdiction with the Chancery, Circuit, and Criminal Courts to grant fiats and writs of injunction, attachment, and other such action in which fiats are necessary.

As amended by: Private Acts of 1947, Chapter 464

SECTION 18. That the Legislature expressly declares that each section, subsection, paragraph and provision of this Act is several, and that should any portion of this Act be held unconstitutional or invalid, the same shall not effect the remainder of this Act, but such unconstitutional or invalid portion shall be elided, and the Legislature declares that it would have enacted this Act with such unconstitutional or invalid portions elided therefrom.

SECTION 19. That all laws or parts of laws in conflict with the provisions of this Act be and they hereby are repealed.

SECTION 20. That this Act shall take effect immediately after its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Passed: March 9, 1939.

COMPILER'S NOTE: See Gregory v. Trousdale County, 193 Tenn. 57, 242 S.W.2d 80 (1951), in which this Act was challenged by the former Clerk of the Circuit and General Sessions Courts of Trousdale County.

Private Acts of 1941 Chapter 264

SECTION 1. That the Court of General Sessions for Trousdale County, Tennessee, is hereby vested with jurisdiction to try and determine and render final judgment in all misdemeanor cases brought before said Court by warrant or information wherein the person charged with such misdemeanor offense enters a plea of guilty or requests a trial upon the merits, and expressly waives an indictment, presentment and a Grand Jury investigation, and a jury trial. In such cases the trial shall proceed before the Judge and without a jury. The final judgment of such court may be appealed to the Criminal Court of Trousdale County, where such appeal shall be tried by a Judge of such court without a jury, and without indictment or presentment.

SECTION 2. That it shall be the mandatory duty of the Judge of the Court of General Sessions when a defendant is brought before such court upon arraignment or trial, to advise such defendant of his constitutional right to the aid of counsel, the right to be tried only upon presentment or indictment by a Grand Jury, the right to make a statement in reference to the accusation or the right to waive such statement, and the right to a trial by jury. Upon the defendant agreeing in writing to waive the right to be put to trial only by presentment or indictment by a Grand Jury and the right to be tried by a jury of his peers, such courts may proceed to hear and determine said case as is provided in Section 1 hereof. Said waiver shall be written or attached to the warrant substantially in words and figures as follows:
The defendant _____ pleads _____ guilty to the offense of _____ and waives his right to be tried only by indictment or presentment preferred by a Grand Jury, and likewise waives trial by a jury of his peers.

SECTION 3. That the Clerk of the Criminal and/or Circuit Court of Trousdale County shall act as clerk of said Court of General Sessions in all criminal cases and when acting in such capacity shall be designated "Clerk of Court of General Sessions of Trousdale County." Said Clerk is hereby authorized to perform the duties of the respective parts of said Court of General Sessions in Criminal cases.

As amended by: Private Acts of 1943, Chapter 230

SECTION 4. That in all trials provided by this Act and finally determined in the Court of General Sessions Court, the costs and fees incident to such trial shall be the same as those provided by law for Justices of the Peace and shall be assessed, taxed and certified as now provided by law.

The fees and other compensation of the Sheriff, his Deputies, Constables, Game Warden and State Highway Patrolmen for the execution of writs and process of said Court and for attendance and mileage of witnesses shall be the same in said Court as those provided by law of the Courts of Justice of the Peace.

Said Costs, fees and mileage of witnesses, the fees, commissions and emoluments of the Sheriff, his Deputies, Constables, State Highway Patrolmen, Game Warden, and other officers, for services to said Court, and the fines and forfeitures adjudged by it shall be handled, accounted for and disbursed as required by law.

As amended by: Private Acts of 1943, Chapter 230

SECTION 5. That in all cases where defendants should be bound over to the Grand Jury of Trousdale County by the Judge of the City of Hartsville such defendant shall be forthwith brought before the Court of General Sessions upon any State's Warrant outstanding, or any State's Warrant or information filed against them, and there arraigned as if such cases originate in the Court of General Sessions as is provided for in Section 1 and 2 of this Act.

SECTION 6. That no warrant or information charging a person with an offense against the laws of the State shall be delivered to any peace officer for the arrest of such person until after an entry in the Misdemeanor Docket has been made by the Clerk showing the names of the person or persons accused, the prosecutor, the officer to whom to be delivered and his signature upon said docket showing receipt of such process. All of such warrants, information, dockets and other records of said Court of General Sessions shall be available to the District Attorney- General for any legal purpose.

SECTION 7. That all bail bonds, recognizance bonds and appearance bonds of persons charged with misdemeanors for their appearance for arraignment or trial in said Court of General Sessions shall be

taken by the Clerk of the Criminal and/or Circuit Court.

SECTION 8. That the Legislature expressly declares that each section, paragraph and provision of this Act is severable, and that should any portion of the Act be held unconstitutional or invalid the same shall not affect the remainder of this Act, but such unconstitutional and invalid portion shall be elided, and the Legislature declares that it would have enacted this Act with such unconstitutional and invalid parts elided therefrom.

SECTION 9. That all laws or parts of laws in conflict with the provisions of this Act be and the same are hereby repealed.

SECTION 10. That this Act shall take effect thirty days after its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Passed: February 7, 1941.

COMPILER'S NOTE: See Gregory v. Trousdale County, 193 Tenn. 57, 242 S.W.2d 80 (1951), and the rehearing of that same case in 194 Tenn. 670, 254 S.W.2d 753 (1953).

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