

April 3, 2003

**S 726. JUDICIAL BRANCH INDEPENDENCE.** *TO REINFORCE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH AS A SEPARATE AND COORDINATE BRANCH OF STATE GOVERNMENT AND TO ENSURE THE FISCAL INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE JUDICIAL BRANCH, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE STATE JUDICIAL COUNCIL.* Amends Ch. 7A by adding a new Art. 29A (Judicial Branch Fiscal Integrity and Accountability). New provisions require the General Assembly to make general fund appropriation as a single sum to the Judicial Branch budget code, and authorize the Director of the Admin. Office of the Courts, in consultation with the State Judicial Council to expend the funds in the manner the director deems appropriate to operate the judicial branch. Creates judicial branch Position Reserve Fund to be used for listed positions to keep up with increased workload of the courts in each fiscal year as determined by the Director. Also creates an Equipment Reserve Fund for replacement and upgrade of equipment as determined by the Director. Provides that carrying over General Fund appropriations balance for next fiscal year one-time expenditures that do not impose additional obligations on the state. Gives Director personnel management authority, including establishment, abolition, allocation and reallocation of positions. Specifies positions exempted from this authority and establishes minimum requirements for certain categories of positions. Makes conforming changes in statutes affecting the duties of the Director and the State Judicial Council. Effective July 1, 2003.

**Intro. by Clodfelter.**

Ref. to	GS 7A, 120, 143
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