

AN ACT REORGANIZING THE JUDICIARY, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 129, August 14, 1981

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Be it enacted by the Batasang Pambansa in session assembled:

PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

SECTION 1. Title.—This Act shall be known as "The Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980."

SEC. 2. Scope.—The reorganization herein provided shall include the Court of Appeals, the Courts of First Instance, the Circuit Criminal Courts, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts, the Courts of Agrarian Relations, the City Courts, the Municipal Courts, and the Municipal Circuit Courts.

Chapter I.—THE INTERMEDIATE APPELLATE COURT

SEC. 3. Organization.—There is hereby created an Intermediate Appellate Court which shall consist of a Presiding Appellate Justice and forty-nine Associate Appellate Justices who shall be appointed by the President of the Philippines. The Presiding Appellate Justice shall be so designated in his appointment, and the Associate Appellate Justices shall have precedence according to the dates of their respective appointments, or when the appointments of two or more of them shall bear the same date, according to the order in which their appointments were issued by the President. Any member who is reappointed to the Court after rendering service in any other position in the government shall retain the precedence to which he was entitled under his original appointment, and his service in the Court shall, to all intents and purposes, be considered as continuous and uninterrupted.

SEC. 4. Exercise of powers and functions.—The Intermediate Appellate Court shall exercise its powers, functions, and duties, through ten (10) divisions, each composed of five members. The Court may sit en banc only for the purpose of exercising administrative, ceremonial, or other non-adjudicatory functions.

SEC. 5. Succession to Office of Presiding Appellate Justice.—In case of a vacancy in the Office of the Presiding Appellate Justice or in the event of his absence or inability to perform the powers, functions, and duties of his office, the Associate Appellate Justice who is first in precedence shall perform his powers, functions, and duties until such disability is removed, or another Presiding Appellate Justice is appointed and has qualified.

SEC. 6. Who presides over sessions of a division.—If the Presiding Appellate Justice is present in any session of a division of the Court, he shall preside. In his absence, the Associate Appellate Justice attending such session who has precedence shall preside.

SEC. 7. Qualifications.—The Presiding Appellate Justice and the Associate Appellate Justices shall have the same qualifications as those provided in the Constitution for Justices of the Supreme Court.

SEC. 8. Grouping of divisions.—Of the ten (10) divisions of the Court, four (4) divisions, to be known as Civil Cases Divisions, shall take cognizance of appeals in civil cases originating from the Regional Trial Courts; two (2) divisions, to be known as Criminal Cases Divisions, of appeals in criminal cases originating from the Regional

Trial Courts; and four (4) divisions, to be known as Special Cases Divisions, of original actions or petitions, petitions for review, and appeals in all other cases, including those from administrative agencies, except as provided in Section 9 hereof.

Except with respect to the Presiding Appellate Justice, the appointment of a member of the Court shall specifically indicate whether it is for the Civil Cases Divisions, the Criminal Cases Divisions, or the Special Cases Divisions of the Court. No member of the Court appointed to any of the three classes of divisions shall be assigned to any of the other classes of divisions, except when authorized by the Supreme Court, upon recommendation of the Intermediate Appellate Court en banc, if the exigencies of the service so require, but such transfer shall in no case be for more than six (6) months: Provided, however, That this prohibition shall not apply if the transfer occurs by reason of a permanent vacancy in the chairmanship of any division, in which case the Associate Appellate Justice who is next in precedence shall assume the chairmanship.

There shall be no seniority or precedence in rank among the divisions of the Court.

SEC. 9. Jurisdiction.—The Intermediate Appellate Court shall exercise:

- Original jurisdiction to issue writs of mandamus, prohibition, certiorari, habeas corpus, and quo warranto, and auxiliary writs or processes, whether or not in aid of its appellate jurisdiction;
- Exclusive original jurisdiction over actions for annulment of judgments of Regional Trial Courts; and
- Exclusive appellate jurisdiction over all final judgments, decisions, resolutions, orders, or awards of Regional Trial Courts and quasi-judicial agencies, instrumentalities, boards, or commissions, except those falling within the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in accordance with the Constitution, the provisions of this Act, and of subparagraph (1) of the third paragraph and subparagraph (4) of the fourth paragraph of Section 17 of the Judiciary Act of 1948.

The Intermediate Appellate Court shall have the power to try cases and conduct hearings, receive evidence and perform any and all acts necessary to resolve factual issues raised in cases falling within its original and appellate jurisdiction, including the power to grant and conduct new trials or further proceedings.

These provisions shall not apply to decisions and interlocutory orders issued under the Labor Code of the Philippines and by the Central Board of Assessment Appeals.

SEC. 10. Place of holding sessions.—The Intermediate Appellate Court shall have its permanent station in the City of Manila. Whenever demanded by public interest, the Supreme Court, upon its own initiative or upon recommendation of the Presiding Appellate Justice, may authorize a division of the Court to hold sessions outside Manila, periodically, or for such periods and at such places as the Supreme Court may determine, for the purpose of hearing and deciding cases.

SEC. 11. Quorum.—A majority of the actual members of the Court shall constitute a quorum for its session en banc. Three members shall constitute a quorum for the sessions of a division. The affirmative votes of the majority of the members present shall be necessary to pass a resolution of the Court en banc. The affirmative votes of three members of a division shall be necessary for the pronouncement of a decision, or final resolution, which shall be reached in consultation before the writing of the opinion by any member of the division.

A motion for reconsideration of its decision or final resolution shall be resolved by the Court within ninety (90) days from the time it is submitted for resolution, and no second motion for reconsideration shall be entertained, unless the action upon the first motion for reconsideration shall have resulted in a reversal or substantial modification of the original decision or final resolution. The second motion for reconsideration shall be resolved

by the Court within forty-five (45) days from the time it is submitted for resolution.

SEC. 12. Internal Rules.—The Court en banc is authorized to promulgate rules or orders governing the constitution of the divisions and the assignment of Appellate Justices thereto, the distribution of cases, and other matters pertaining to the operations of the Court or its divisions. Copies of such rules and orders shall be furnished the Supreme Court, which rules and orders shall be effective fifteen (15) days after receipt thereof, unless directed otherwise by the Supreme Court.

Chapter II.—REGIONAL TRIAL COURTS

SEC. 13. Creation of Regional Trial Courts.—There are hereby created thirteen (13) Regional Trial Courts, one for each of the following judicial regions:

The First Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Mountain Province, and Pangasinan, and the cities of Baguio, Dagupan, Laoag, and San Carlos;

The Second Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Batanes, Cagayan, Ifugao, Isabela, Kalinga-Apayao, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino;

The Third Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Bataan, Bulacan (except the municipality of Valenzuela), Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales, and the cities of Angeles, Cabanatuan, Olongapo, Palayan, and San Jose;

The National Capital Judicial Region, consisting of the cities of Manila, Quezon, Pasay, and Caloocan, and the municipalities of Navotas, Malabon, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Makati, Pasig, Pateros, Taguig, Marikina, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, and Valenzuela;

The Fourth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Marinduque, Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Palawan, Quezon, Rizal (except the cities and municipalities embraced within the National Capital Judicial Region), Romblon, and Aurora, and the cities of Batangas, Cavite, Lipa, Lucena, Puerto Princesa, San Pablo, Tagaytay, and Trece Martires;

The Fifth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Catanduanes, Masbate, and Sorsogon, and the cities of Legaspi, Naga, and Iriga;

The Sixth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental, and the cities of Bacolod, Bago, Cadiz, Iloilo, La Carlota, Roxas, San Carlos, and Silay, and the sub-province of Guimaras ;

The Seventh Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor, and the cities of Bais, Canlaon, Cebu, Danao, Dumaguete, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue, Tagbilaran, and Toledo;

The Eighth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Eastern Samar, Leyte, Northern Samar, Southern Leyte, and Samar, the sub-province of Biliran, and the cities of Calbayog, Ormoc, and Tacloban;

The Ninth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur, and the cities of Dapitan, Dipolog, Pagadian, and Zamboanga;

The Tenth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Bukidnon, Camiguin, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, and Surigao del Norte, and the cities of Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Gingoog, Ozamis, Oroquieta, Surigao, and Tangub;

The Eleventh Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur,

South Cotabato, and Surigao del Sur, and the cities of Davao and General Santos; and

The Twelfth Judicial Region, consisting of the provinces of Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat, and the cities of Cotabato, Iligan, and Marawi.

In case of transfer or redistribution of the provinces, sub-provinces, cities or municipalities comprising the regions established by law for purposes of the administrative field organization of the various departments and agencies of the government, the composition of the judicial regions herein constituted shall be deemed modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. Regional Trial Courts.—

(a) Fifty-seven Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the First Judicial Region. There shall be:

Two branches (Branches I and II) for the province of Abra, with seats at Bangued;

Eight branches (Branches III to X) for the province of Benguet and the city of Baguio, Branches III to VII with seats at Baguio City, and Branches VIII to X at La Trinidad;

Nine branches (Branches XI to XIX) for the province of Ilocos Norte and the city of Laoag, Branches XI to XVI with seats at Laoag City, Branches XVII and XVIII at Batac, and Branch XIX at Bangu;

Six branches (Branches XX to XXV) for the province of Ilocos Sur, Branches XX and XXI with seats at Vigan, Branch XXII at Narvacan, Branch XXIII at Candon, Branch XXIV at Cabugao, and Branch XXV at Tagudin;

Nine branches (Branches XXVI to XXXIV) for the province of La Union, Branches XXVI to XXX with seats at San Fernando, Branches XXXI and XXXII at Agoo, Branch XXXIII at Bauang, and Branch XXXIV at Balaoan;

Two branches (Branches XXXV and XXXVI) for the province of Mountain Province, with seats at Bontoc; and

Twenty-one branches (Branches XXXVII to LVII) for the province of Pangasinan and the cities of Dagupan and San Carlos, Branches XXXVII to XXXIX with seats at Lingayen, Branches XL to XLIV at Dagupan, Branches XLV to XLIX at Urdaneta, Branch L at Villasis, Branches LI and LII at Tayug, Branch LIII at Rosales, Branches LIV and LV at Alaminos, and Branches LVI and LVII at San Carlos.

(b) Thirty-two Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Second Judicial Region. There shall be:

Twelve branches (Branches I to XII) for the province of Cagayan, Branches I to V with seats at Tuguegarao, Branches VI to X at Aparri, Branch XI at Tuao, and Branch XII at Sanchez Mira;

One branch (Branch XIII) for the province of Batanes, with seat at Basco;

Two branches (Branches XIV and XV) for the province of Ifugao, Branch XIV with seat at Lagawe, and Branch XV at Potia;

Nine branches (Branches XVI to XXIV) for the province of Isabela, Branches XVI to XVIII with seats at Ilagan, Branches XIX and XX at Cauayan, Branch XXI at Santiago, Branch XXII at Cabagan, Branch XXIII at Roxas, and Branch XXIV at Echague;

Two branches (Branches XXV and XXVI) for the province of Kalinga-Apayao, Branch XXV with seat at Tabuk, and Branch XXVI at Luna;

Four branches (Branches XXVII to XXX) for the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Branches XXVII to XXIX with seats at Bayombong, and Branch XXX at Bambang; and

Two branches (Branches XXXI and XXXII) for the province of Quirino, with seats at Cabarroguis.

(c) Seventy-five Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Third Judicial Region. There shall be:

Five branches (Branches I to V) for the province of Bataan, Branches I to III with seats at Balanga, Branch IV at Mariveles, and Branch V at Dinalupihan;

Seventeen branches (Branches VI to XXII) for the province of Bulacan (except the municipality of Valenzuela), with seats at Malolos;

Eighteen branches (Branches XXIII to XL) for the province of Nueva Ecija and the cities of Cabanatuan, San Jose and Palayan, Branches XXIII to XXX with seats at Cabanatuan City, Branches XXXI to XXXIII at Guimba, Branches XXXIV to XXXVI at Gapan, Branch XXXVII at Sto. Domingo, Branches XXXVIII and XXXIX at San Jose, and Branch XL at Palayan;

Twenty-two branches (Branches XLI to LXII) for the province of Pampanga and the city of Angeles, Branches XLI to XLVIII with seats at San Fernando, Branches XLIX to LIII at Guagua, Branches LIV and LV at Macabebe, and Branches LVI to LXII at Angeles City;

Six branches (Branches LXIII to LXVIII) for the province of Tarlac, Branches LXIII to LXV with seats at Tarlac, Branch LXVI at Capas, Branch LXVII at Paniqui, and Branch LXVIII at Camiling; and

Seven branches (Branches LXIX to LXXV) for the province of Zambales and the city of Olongapo, Branches LXIX to LXXI with seats at Iba and Branches LXXII to LXXV at Olongapo City.

(d) One hundred seventy-two Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the National Capital Judicial Region. There shall be:

Eighty-two branches (Branches I to LXXXII) for the city of Manila, with seats thereat;

Twenty-five branches (Branches LXXXIII to CVII) for Quezon City, with seats thereat;

Twelve branches (Branches CVIII to CXIX) for Pasay City, with seats thereat;

Twelve branches (Branches CXX to CXXXI) for Caloocan City, with seats thereat;

Thirty-nine branches (Branches CXXXII to CLXX) for the municipalities of Navotas, Malabon, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Makati, Pasig, Pateros, Taguig, Marikina, Parañaque, Las Pinas, and Muntinlupa, Branches CXXXII to CL with seats at Makati, Branches CLI to CLXVIII at Pasig, and Branches CLXIX and CLXX at Malabon; and

Two branches (Branches CLXXI and CLXXII) for the municipality of Valenzuela, with seats thereat.

(e) Eighty-two Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Fourth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Fourteen branches (Branches I to XIV) for the province of Batangas and the cities of Lipa and Batangas, Branches I to IV with seats at Batangas City, Branch V at Lemery, Branches VI to VIII at Tananan, Branches IX to XI at Balayan, Branches XII and XIII at Lipa, and Branch XIV at Nasugbu;

Nine branches (Branches XV to XXIII) for the province of Cavite and the cities of Cavite, Tagaytay and Trece Martires, Branch XV with seat at Naic, Branches XVI and XVII at Cavite City, Branch XVIII at Tagaytay City, Branch XIX at Bacoar, Branches XX to XXII at Imus, and Branch XXIII at Trece Martires;

Fourteen branches (Branches XXIV to XXXVII) for the province of Laguna and the city of San Pablo, Branches XXIV and XXV with seats at Biñan, Branches XXVI to XXVIII at Sta. Cruz, Branches XXIX to XXXII at San Pablo City, Branch XXXIII at Siniloan, and Branches XXXIV to XXXVII at Calamba;

One branch (Branch XXXVIII) for the province of Marinduque, with seat at Boac;

Five branches (Branches XXXIX to XLIII) for the province of Mindoro Oriental, Branches XXXIX and XL with seats at Calapan, Branches XLI and XLII at Pinamalayan, and Branch XLIII at Roxas;

Three branches (Branches XLIV to XLVI) for the province of Mindoro Occidental, Branch XLIV with seat at Mamburao, and Branches XLV and XLVI at San Jose;

Six branches (Branches XLVII to LII) for the province of Palawan and the city of Puerto Princesa, with seats at Puerto Princesa City;

Thirteen branches (Branches LIII to LXV) for the province of Quezon and the city of Lucena, Branches LIII to LX with seats at Lucena City, Branches LXI and LXII at Gumaca, Branch LXIII at Calauag, Branch LXIV at Mauban, and Branch LXV at Infanta;

One branch (Branch LXVI) for the province of Aurora, with seat at Baler;

Fourteen branches (Branches LXVII to LXXX) for the province of Rizal except the cities and municipalities embraced within the National Capital Judicial Region, Branches LXVII to LXX with seats at Binangonan, Branches LXXI to LXXIV at Antipolo, Branches LXXV to LXXVII at San Mateo, and Branches LXXVIII to LXXX at Morong; and

Two branches (Branches LXXXI and LXXXII) for the province of Romblon, Branch LXXXI with seat at Romblon, and Branch LXXXII at Odiongan.

(f) Fifty-five Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Fifth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Eighteen branches (Branches I to XVIII) for the province of Albay and the city of Legaspi, Branches I to X with seats at Legaspi City, Branches XI to XIV at Ligao, and Branches XV to XVIII at Tabaco;

Nineteen branches (Branches XIX to XXXVII) for the province of Camarines Sur and the cities of Naga and Iriga, Branches XIX to XXVIII with seats at Naga City, Branch XXIX at Libmanan, Branch XXX at Tigaon, Branches XXXI to XXXIII at Pili, and Branches XXXIV to XXXVII at Iriga City;

Four branches (Branches XXXVIII to XLI) for the province of Camarines Norte, with seats at Daet;

Two branches (Branches XLII and XLIII) for the province of Catanduanes, with seats at Virac;

Seven branches (Branches XLIV to L) for the province of Masbate, Branches XLIV to XLVIII with seats at Masbate, Branch XLIX at Cataingan, and Branch L at San Jacinto; and

Five branches (Branches LI to LV) for the province of Sorsogon, Branches LI to LIII with seats at Sorsogon, Branch LIV at Gubat, and Branch LV at Irosin.

(g) Sixty-three Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Sixth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Nine branches (Branches I to IX) for the province of Aklan, with seats at Kalibo;

Four branches (Branches X to XIII) for the province of Antique, Branches X to XII with seats at San Jose, and Branch XIII at Culasi;

Eight branches (Branches XIV to XXI) for the province of Capiz and the city of Roxas, Branches XIV to XIX with seats at Roxas City and Branches XX and XXI at Mambusao;

Eighteen branches (Branches XXII to XXXIX) for the province of Iloilo, the sub-province of Guimaras, and the city of Iloilo, with seats at Iloilo City; and

Twenty-four branches (Branches XL to LXIII) for the province of Negros Occidental, and the cities of

Bacolod, Bago, Cadiz, La Carlota, San Carlos and Silay, Branch XL with seat at Silay City, Branches XLI to LIV at Bacolod City, Branches LV and LVI at Himamaylan, Branches LVII to LIX at San Carlos City, Branch LX at Cadiz City, Branch LXI at Kabankalan, Branch LXII at Bago City, and Branch LXIII at La Carlota City.

(h) Forty-six Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Seventh Judicial Region. There shall be:

Four branches (Branches I to IV) for the province of Bohol and the city of Tagbilaran, with seats at Tagbilaran City;

Twenty-five branches (Branches V to XXIX) for the province of Cebu and the cities of Cebu, Danao, Lapu-Lapu, Mandaue and Toledo, Branches V to XXIV with seats at Cebu City, Branch XXV at Danao City, Branch XXVI at Argao, Branch XXVII at Lapu-Lapu City, Branch XXVIII at Mandaue City, and Branch XXIX at Toledo City;

Sixteen branches (Branches XXX to XLV) for the province of Negros Oriental and the cities of Dumaguete, Bais and Canlaon, Branches XXX to XLIV with seats at Dumaguete City, and Branch XLV at Bais City; and

One branch (Branch XLVI) for the province of Siquijor, with seat at Larena.

(i) Thirty-three Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Eighth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Five branches (Branches I to V) for the province of Eastern Samar, Branches I and II with seats at Borongan, Branch III at Guiuan, Branch IV at Dolores, and Branch V at Oras;

Thirteen branches (Branches VI to XVIII) for the province of Leyte, the sub-province of Biliran, and the cities of Ormoc and Tacloban, Branches VI to IX with seats at Tacloban City, Branch X at Abuyog, Branch XI at Calubian, Branch XII at Ormoc City, Branch XIII at Carigara, Branch XIV at Baybay, Branch XV at Burauen, Branch XVI at Naval, Branch XVII at Palompon, and Branch XVIII at Hilongos;

Five branches (Branches XIX to XXIII) for the province of Northern Samar, Branches XIX and XX with seats at Catarman, Branches XXI and XXII at Laoang, and Branch XXIII at Allen;

Three branches (Branches XXIV to XXVI) for the province of Southern Leyte, Branches XXIV and XXV with seats at Maasin, and Branch XXVI at San Juan; and

Seven branches (Branches XXVII to XXXIII) for the province of Samar and the city of Calbayog, Branches XXVII to XXIX with seats at Catbalogan, Branch XXX at Basey, Branches XXXI and XXXII at Calbayog City, and Branch XXXIII at Calbiga.

(j) Twenty-four Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Ninth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Two branches (Branches I and II) for the province of Basilan, with seats at Isabela;

Two branches (Branches III and IV) for the province of Sulu, Branch III with seat at Jolo, and Branch IV at Parang;

One branch (Branch V) for the province of Tawi-Tawi, with seat at Bongao;

Six branches (Branches VI to XI) for the province of Zamboanga del Norte and the cities of Dipolog and Dapitan, Branches VI to X with seats at Dipolog City, and Branch XI at Sindangan; and

Thirteen branches (Branches XII to XXIV) for the province of Zamboanga del Sur and the cities of Pagadian and Zamboanga, Branches XII to XVII with seats at Zamboanga City, Branches XVIII to XXII at Pagadian City, Branch XXIII at Molave, and Branch XXIV at Ipil.

(k) Thirty-two Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Tenth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Five branches ("Branches I to V) for the province of Agusan del Norte and the city of Butuan, with seats at Butuan City;

Two branches (Branches VI and VII) for the province of Agusan del Sur, Branch VI with seat at Prosperidad and Branch VII with seat at Bayugan;

Four branches (Branches VIII to XI) for the province of Bukidnon, Branches VIII to X with seats at Malaybalay and Branch XI at Manolo Fortich;

Five branches (Branches XII to XVI) for the province of Misamis Occidental and the cities of Oroquieta, Ozamis, and Tangub, Branches XII to XIV with seats at Oroquieta City, Branch XV at Ozamis City, and Branch XVI at Tangub City;

Eleven branches (Branches XVII to XXVII) for the province of Misamis Oriental and the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Gingoog, Branches XVII to XXV with seats at Cagayan de Oro City, Branch XXVI at Medina, and Branch XXVII at Gingoog City;

One branch (Branch XXVIII) for the province of Camiguin, with seat at Mambajao; and

Four branches (Branches XXIX to XXXII) for the province of Surigao del Norte and the City of Surigao, Branches XXIX and XXX with seats at Surigao City, Branch XXXI at Dapa, and Branch XXXII at Dinagat, Dinagat Island.

(l) Twenty-nine Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Eleventh Judicial Region. There shall be:

Four branches (Branches I to IV) for the province of Davao del Norte, Branches I and II with seats at Tagum, Branch III at Nabunturan, and Branch IV at Panabo;

Three branches (Branches V to VII) for the province of Davao Oriental, Branches V and VI with seats at Mati and Branch VII at Baganga;

Fourteen branches (Branches VIII to XXI) for the province of Davao del Sur and the city of Davao, Branches VIII to XVII with seats at Davao City, Branches XVIII and XIX at Digos, Branch XX at Malita, and Branch XXI at Bansalan;

Five branches (Branches XXII to XXVI) for the province of South Cotabato and the city of General Santos, Branches XXII and XXIII with seats at General Santos City, Branches XXIV and XXV at Koronadal, and Branch XXVI at Surallah; and

Three branches (Branches XXVII to XXIX) for the province of Surigao del Sur, Branch XXVII with seat at Tandag, Branch XXVIII at Lianga, and Branch XXIX at Bislig.

(m) Twenty Regional Trial Judges shall be commissioned for the Twelfth Judicial Region. There shall be:

Seven branches (Branches I to VII) for the province of Lanao del Norte and the city of Iligan, Branches 1 to VI with seats at Iligan City, and Branch VII at Tubod;

Five branches (Branches VIII to XII) for the province of Lanao del Sur and the city of Marawi, Branches VIII to X with seats at Marawi City, and Branches XI and XII at Malabang;

Three branches (Branches XIII to XV) for the province of Maguindanao and the city of Cotabato, Branches XIII and XIV with seats at Cotabato City, and Branch XV at Maganoy ;

Three branches (Branches XVI to XVIII) for the province of North Cotabato, Branch XVI with seat at Kabacan, Branch XVII at Kidapawan. and Branch XVIII at Mid-sayap; and

Two branches (Branches XIX and XX) for the province of Sultan Kudarat, Branch XIX with seat at Isulan, and

Branch XX at Tacurong.

SEC. 15. Qualifications.—No person shall be appointed Regional Trial Judge unless he is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, at least thirty-five years of age, and, for at least ten years, has been engaged in the practice of law in the Philippines or has held a public office in the Philippines requiring admission to the practice of law as an indispensable requisite.

SEC. 16. Time and duration of sessions.—The time and duration of daily sessions of the Regional Trial Courts shall be determined by the Supreme Court: Provided, however, That all motions, except those requiring immediate action, shall be heard in the afternoon of every Friday, unless it falls on a holiday, in which case, the hearing shall be held on the afternoon of the next succeeding business day: Provided, further, That the Supreme Court may, for good reasons, fix a different motion day in specified areas.

SEC. 17. Appointment and assignment of Regional Trial Judges.—Every Regional Trial Judge shall be appointed to a region which shall be his permanent station, and his appointment shall state the branch of the court and the seat thereof to which he shall be originally assigned. However, the Supreme Court may assign temporarily a Regional Trial Judge to another region as public interest may require, provided that such temporary assignment shall not last longer than six (6) months without the consent of the Regional Trial Judge concerned.

A Regional Trial Judge may be assigned by the Supreme Court to any branch or city or municipality within the same region as public interest may require, and such assignment shall not be deemed an assignment to another station within the meaning of this section.

SEC. 18. Authority to define territory appurtenant to each branch.—The Supreme Court shall define the territory over which a branch of the Regional Trial Court shall exercise its authority. The territory thus defined shall be deemed to be the territorial area of the branch concerned for purposes of determining the venue of all suits, proceedings or actions, whether civil or criminal, as well as determining the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts over which the said branch may exercise appellate jurisdiction. The power herein granted shall be exercised with a view to making the courts readily accessible to the people of the different parts of the region and making the attendance of litigants and witnesses as inexpensive as possible.

SEC. 19. Jurisdiction in civil cases.—Regional Trial Courts shall exercise exclusive original jurisdiction:

- In all civil actions in which the subject of the litigation is incapable of pecuniary estimation;
- In all civil actions which involve the title to, or possession of, real property, or any interest therein, except actions for forcible entry into and unlawful detainer of lands or buildings, original jurisdiction over which is conferred upon Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts;
- In all actions in admiralty and maritime jurisdiction where the demand or claim exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) ;
- In all matters of probate, both testate and intestate, where the gross value of the estate exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00);
- In all actions involving the contract of marriage and marital relations;
- In all cases not within the exclusive jurisdiction of any court, tribunal, person or body exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions;
- In all civil actions and special proceedings falling within the exclusive original jurisdiction of a Juvenile and

Domestic Relations Court and of the Courts of Agrarian Relations as now provided by law; and

- In all other cases in which the demand, exclusive of interest and costs or the value of the property in controversy, amounts to more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00).

SEC. 20. Jurisdiction in criminal cases.—Regional Trial Courts shall exercise exclusive original jurisdiction in all criminal cases not within the exclusive jurisdiction of any court, tribunal or body, except those now falling under the exclusive and concurrent jurisdiction of the Sandiganbayan which shall hereafter be exclusively taken cognizance of by the latter.

SEC. 21. Original jurisdiction in other cases.—Regional Trial Courts shall exercise original jurisdiction:

- In the issuance of writs of certiorari, prohibition, mandamus, quo warranto, habeas corpus and injunction which may be enforced in any part of their respective regions; and

- In actions affecting ambassadors and other public ministers and consuls.

SEC. 22. Appellate jurisdiction.—Regional Trial Courts shall exercise appellate jurisdiction over all cases decided by Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts in their respective territorial jurisdictions. Such cases shall be decided on the basis of the entire record of the proceedings had in the court of origin and such memoranda and/or briefs as may be submitted by the parties or required by the Regional Trial Courts. The decision of the Regional Trial Courts in such cases shall be appealable by petition for review to the Intermediate Appellate Court which may give it due course only when the petition shows prima facie that the lower court has committed an error of fact or law that will warrant a reversal or modification of the decision or judgment sought to be reviewed.

SEC. 23. Special jurisdiction to try special cases.—The Supreme Court may designate certain branches of the Regional Trial Courts to handle exclusively criminal cases, juvenile and domestic relations cases, agrarian cases, urban land reform cases which do not fall under the jurisdiction of quasi-judicial bodies and agencies, and/or such other special cases as the Supreme Court may determine in the interest of a speedy and efficient administration of justice.

SEC. 24. Special Rules of Procedure.—Whenever a Regional Trial Court takes cognizance of juvenile and domestic relations cases and/or agrarian cases, the special rules of procedure applicable under present laws to such cases shall continue to be applied, unless subsequently amended by law or by rules of court promulgated by the Supreme Court.

Chapter III.—METROPOLITAN TRIAL COURTS, MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURTS, AND MUNICIPAL CIRCUIT TRIAL COURTS

SEC. 25. Establishment of Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.—There shall be created a Metropolitan Trial Court in each metropolitan area established by law, a Municipal Trial Court in each of the other cities or municipalities, and a Municipal Circuit Trial Court in each circuit comprising such cities and/or municipalities as are grouped together pursuant to law.

SEC. 26. Qualifications.—No person shall be appointed judge of a Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court, or Municipal Circuit Trial Court unless he is a natural-born citizen of the Philippines, at least 30 years of age, and, for at least five years, has been engaged in the practice of law in the Philippines, or has held a public office in the Philippines requiring admission to the practice of law as an indispensable requisite.

SEC. 27. Metropolitan Trial Courts of the National Capital Region.—There shall be a Metropolitan Trial Court in the National Capital Region, to be known as the Metropolitan Trial Court of Metro Manila, which shall be

composed of eighty-two (82) branches. There shall be:

- Thirty branches (Branches I to XXX) for the city of Manila with seats thereat;
- Thirteen branches (Branches XXXI to XLIII) for Quezon City with seats thereat;
- Five branches (Branches XLIV to XLVIII) for Pasay City with seats thereat;
- Five branches (Branches XLIX to LIII) for Caloocan City with seats thereat;
- One branch (Branch LIV) for Navotas with seat thereat;
- Two branches (Branches LV and LVI) for Malabon with seats thereat;
- Two branches (Branches LVII and LVIII) for San Juan with seats thereat;
- Two branches (Branches LIX and LX) for Mandaluyong with seats thereat;
- Seven branches (Branches LXI to LXVII) for Makati with seats thereat;
- Five branches (Branches LXVIII to LXXII) for Pasig with seats thereat;
- One branch (Branch LXXIII) for Pateros with seat thereat;
- One branch (Branch LXXIV) for Taguig with seat thereat;
- Two branches (Branches LXXV and LXXVI) for Marikina with seats thereat;
- Two branches (Branches LXXVII and LXXVIII) for Paranaque with seats thereat;
- One branch (Branch LXXIX) for Las Piñas with seat thereat;
- One branch (Branch LXXX) for Muntinlupa with seat thereat; and
- Two branches (Branches LXXXI and LXXXII) for Valenzuela with seats thereat.

SEC. 28. Other Metropolitan Trial Courts.—The Supreme Court shall constitute Metropolitan Trial Courts in such other metropolitan areas as may be established by law whose territorial jurisdiction shall be co-extensive with the cities and municipalities comprising the metropolitan area.

Every Metropolitan Trial Judge shall be appointed to a metropolitan area which shall be his permanent station and his appointment shall state, the branch of the court and the seat thereof to which he shall be originally assigned. A Metropolitan Trial Judge may be assigned by the Supreme Court to any branch within said metropolitan area as the interest of justice may require, and such assignment shall not be deemed an assignment to another station within the meaning of this section.

SEC. 29. Municipal Trial Courts in cities.—In every city which does not form part of a metropolitan area there shall be a Municipal Trial Court with one branch except as hereunder provided:

- Two branches for Laoag City;
- Four branches for Baguio City;
- Three branches for Dagupan City;
- Five branches for Olongapo City;
- Three branches for Cabanatuan City;
- Two branches for San Jose City;
- Three branches for Angeles City;
- Two branches for Cavite City;
- Two branches for Batangas City;
- Two branches for Lucena City;
- Three branches for Naga City;
- Two branches for Iriga City;
- Three branches for Legaspi City;
- Two branches for Roxas City;
- Four branches for Iloilo City;
- Seven branches for Bacolod City;
- Two branches for Dumaguete City;
- Two branches for Tacloban City;

Eight branches for Cebu City;
Three branches for Mandaue City;
Two branches for Tagbilaran City;
Two branches for Surigao City;
Two branches for Butuan City;
Five branches for Cagayan de Oro City;
Seven branches for Davao City;
Three branches for General Santos City;
Two branches for Oroquieta City;
Three branches for Ozamis City;
Two branches for Dipolog City;
Four branches for Zamboanga City;
Two branches for Pagadian City; and
Two branches for Iligan City.

SEC. 30. Municipal Trial Courts.—In each of the municipalities that are not comprised within a metropolitan area and a municipal circuit there shall be a Municipal Trial Court which shall have one branch, except as here-under provided:

Two branches for San Fernando, La Union;
Four branches for Tuguegarao;
Three branches for Lallo, and two branches for Aparri, both of Cagayan;
Two branches for Santiago, Isabela;
Two branches each for Malolos, Meycauayan and Bulacan, all of Bulacan Province;
Four branches for San Fernando and two branches for Guagua, both of Pampanga;
Two branches for Tarlac, Tarlac;
Two branches for San Pedro, Laguna; and
Two branches each for Antipolo and Binangonan, both in Rizal.

SEC. 31. Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.—There shall be a Municipal Circuit Trial Court in each area denned as a municipal circuit, comprising one or more cities and/ or one or more municipalities. The municipalities comprising municipal circuits as organized under Administrative Order No. 33, issued on June 13, 1978 by the Supreme Court pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 537, are hereby constituted as municipal circuits for purposes of the establishment of the Municipal Circuit Trial Courts, and the appointments thereto of Municipal Circuit Trial Judges: Provided, however, That the Supreme Court may, as the interests of justice may require, further reorganize the said courts taking into account workload, geographical location, and such other factors as will contribute to a rational allocation thereof, pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 537 which shall be applicable insofar as they are not inconsistent with this Act.

Every Municipal Circuit Trial Judge shall be appointed to a municipal circuit which shall be his official station.

The Supreme Court shall determine the city or municipality where the Municipal Circuit Trial Court shall hold sessions.

SEC. 32. Jurisdiction of Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts in criminal cases.—Except in cases falling within the exclusive original jurisdiction of Regional Trial Courts and of the Sandiganbayan, the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts shall exercise:

- Exclusive original jurisdiction over all violations of city or municipal ordinances committed within their respective territorial jurisdiction; and

- Exclusive original jurisdiction over all offenses punishable with imprisonment of not exceeding four years and two months, or a fine of not more than four thousand pesos, or both such fine and imprisonment, regardless of other impossible accessory or other penalties, including the civil liability arising from such offenses or predicated thereon, irrespective of kind, nature, value, or amount thereof: Provided, however, That in offenses involving damage to property through criminal negligence they shall have exclusive original jurisdiction where the impossible fine does not exceed twenty thousand pesos.

SEC. 33. Jurisdiction of Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts in civil cases.—Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts shall exercise:

- Exclusive original jurisdiction over civil actions and probate proceedings, testate and intestate, including the grant of provisional remedies in proper cases, where the value of the personal property, estate, or amount of the demand does not exceed twenty thousand pesos exclusive of interest and costs but inclusive of damages of whatever kind, the amount of which must be specifically alleged: Provided, That where there are several claims or causes of action between the same or different parties, embodied in the same complaint, the amount of the demand shall be the totality of the claims in all the causes of action, irrespective of whether the causes of action arose out of the same or different transactions; and

- Exclusive original jurisdiction over cases of forcible entry and unlawful detainer: Provided, That when, in such cases, the defendant raises the question of ownership in his pleadings and the question of possession cannot be resolved without deciding the issue of ownership, the issue of ownership shall be resolved only to determine, the issue of possession.

SEC. 34. Delegated jurisdiction in cadastral and land registration cases.—Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts may be assigned by the Supreme Court to hear and determine cadastral or land registration cases covering lots where there is no controversy or opposition, or contested lots the value of which does not exceed twenty thousand pesos, such value to be ascertained by the affidavit of the claimant or by agreement of the respective claimants if there are more than one, or from the corresponding tax declaration of the real property. Their decisions in these cases shall be appealable in the same manner as decisions of the Regional Trial Courts.

SEC. 35. Special jurisdiction in certain cases.—In the absence of all the Regional Trial Judges in a province or city, any Metropolitan Trial Judge, Municipal Trial Judge, Municipal Circuit Trial Judge may hear and decide petitions for a writ of habeas corpus or applications for bail in criminal cases in the province or city where the absent Regional Trial Judges sit.

SEC. 36. Summary procedures in special cases.—In Metropolitan Trial Courts and Municipal Trial Courts with at least two branches, the Supreme Court may designate one or more branches thereof to try exclusively forcible entry and unlawful detainer cases, those involving violations of traffic laws, rules and regulations, violations of the rental law, and such other cases requiring summary disposition as the Supreme Court may determine. The Supreme Court shall adopt special rules or procedures applicable to such cases in order to achieve an expeditious and inexpensive determination thereof without regard to technical rules. Such simplified procedures may provide that affidavits and counter-affidavits may be admitted in lieu of oral testimony and that the periods for filing pleadings shall be non-extendible.

SEC. 37. Preliminary investigation.—Judges of Metropolitan Trial Courts, except those in the National Capital Region, of Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts shall have authority to conduct preliminary investigation of crimes alleged to have been committed within their respective territorial jurisdictions which are cognizable by the Regional Trial Courts.

The preliminary investigation shall be conducted in accordance with the procedure prescribed in Section 1, paragraphs (a), (b), (c), and (d), of Presidential Decree No. 911: Provided, however, That if after the preliminary investigation the Judge finds a prima facie case, he shall forward the records of the case to the Provincial/City Fiscal for the filing of the corresponding information with the proper court.

No warrant of arrest shall be issued by the Judge in connection with any criminal complaint filed with him for preliminary investigation, unless after an examination in writing and under oath or affirmation of the complainant and his witnesses, he finds that a probable cause exists.

Any warrant of arrest issued in accordance herewith may be served anywhere in the Philippines.

SEC. 38. Judgments and processes.— (1) All judgments determining the merits of cases shall be in writing, stating clearly the facts and the law on which they were based, signed by the Judge and filed with the Clerk of Court. Such judgment shall be appealable to the Regional Trial Courts in accordance with the procedure now prescribed by law for appeals to the Court of First Instance, by the provisions of this Act, and by such rules as the Supreme Court may hereafter prescribe.

(2) All processes issued by the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts, in cases falling within their jurisdiction, may be served anywhere in the Philippines without the necessity of certification by the Judge of the Regional Trial Court.

Chapter IV.—GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 39. Appeals.—The period for appeal from final orders, resolutions, awards, judgments, or decisions of any court in all cases shall be fifteen (15) days counted from the notice of the final order, resolution, award, judgment, or decision appealed from: Provided, however, That in habeas corpus cases, the period for appeal shall be forty-eight (48) hours from the notice of the judgment appealed from.

No record on appeal shall be required to take an appeal. In lieu thereof, the entire original record shall be transmitted with all the pages prominently numbered consecutively, together with an index of the contents thereof.

This section shall not apply in appeals in special proceedings and in other cases wherein multiple appeals are allowed under applicable provisions of the Rules of Court.

SEC. 40. Form of decision in appealed cases.—Every decision or final resolution of a court in appealed cases shall clearly and distinctly state the findings of fact and the conclusions of law on which it is based, which may be contained in the decision or final resolution itself, or adopted by reference from those set forth in the decision, order, or resolution appealed from.

SEC. 41. Salaries.—Intermediate Appellate Justices, Regional Trial Judges, Metropolitan Trial Judges, Municipal Trial Judges, and Municipal Circuit Trial Judges shall receive such compensation and allowances as may be authorized by the President along the guidelines set forth in Letter of Implementation No. 93 pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 985, as amended by Presidential Decree No. 1597.

SEC. 42. Longevity pay.—A monthly longevity pay equivalent to 5% of the monthly basic pay shall be paid to the Justices and Judges of the courts herein created for each five years of continuous, efficient, and meritorious service rendered in the judiciary: Provided, That in no case shall the total salary of each Justice or Judge concerned, after this longevity pay is added, exceed the salary of the Justice or Judge next in rank.

SEC. 43. Staffing pattern.—The Supreme Court shall submit to the President, within thirty (30) days from the date of the effectivity of this Act, a staffing pattern for all courts constituted pursuant to this Act which shall be the

basis of the implementing order to be issued by the President in accordance with the immediately succeeding section.

SEC. 44. Transitory provisions.—The provisions of this Act shall be immediately carried out in accordance with an Executive Order to be issued by the President. The Court of Appeals, the Courts of First Instance, the Circuit Criminal Courts, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts, the Courts of Agrarian Relations, the City Courts, the Municipal Courts, and the Municipal Circuit Courts shall continue to function as presently constituted and organized, until the completion of the reorganization provided in this Act as declared by the President. Upon such declaration, the said courts shall be deemed automatically abolished and the incumbents thereof shall cease to hold office. The cases pending in the old Courts shall be transferred to the appropriate Courts constituted pursuant to this Act, together with the pertinent functions, records, equipment, property and the necessary personnel.

The applicable appropriations shall likewise be transferred to the appropriate courts constituted pursuant to this Act, to be augmented as may be necessary from the funds for organizational changes as provided in Batas Pambansa Blg. 80. Said funding shall thereafter be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 45. Shari'a Courts.—Shari'a Courts to be constituted as provided for in Presidential Decree No. 1083, otherwise known as the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines", shall be included in the funding appropriations so provided in this Act.

SEC. 46. Gratuity of judges and personnel separated from office.—All members of the judiciary and subordinate employees who shall be separated from office by reason of the reorganization authorized herein, shall be granted a gratuity at a rate equivalent to one month's salary for every year of continuous service rendered in any branch of the government or equivalent nearest fraction thereof favorable to them on the basis of the highest salary received: Provided, That such member of the judiciary or employee shall have the option to retire under the Judiciary Retirement Law or general retirement law, if he has met or satisfied the requirements therefor.

SEC. 47. Repealing clause.—The provisions of Republic Act No. 296, otherwise known as the Judiciary Act of 1948, as amended, of Republic Act No. 5179, as amended, of the Rules of Court, and of all other statutes, letters of instructions and general orders or parts thereof, inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or accordingly modified.

SEC. 48. Date of effectivity.—This Act shall take effect immediately.

Approved, August 14, 1981.

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