

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER H-2025-59-A

**AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ASSIGNING DUTY JUDGE
ROTATION FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2026
(amended only as to the attachment)**

WHEREAS, The Undersigned having considered there are times that an assigned Judge is not available to sign orders, warrants, or other documents that require immediate action; and

WHEREAS, realizing that it is in the best interest of judicial efficiency that there be a Judge assigned on a regular weekly basis to handle unusual and extraordinary requests or proceedings which require such immediate action; and

WHEREAS, further realizing that it would be unfair and inequitable to have one Judge permanently assigned to handle such matters, and that it would be in the best interest of fairness to rotate this duty among the various Judges of the county; and

WHEREAS, being otherwise advised in the premises, it is upon consideration **ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** as follows:

1) The Administrative Judge of Hernando County shall place the names of all circuit and county Judges in the county into a random rotation, and shall rotate weekly the names of the Judges in order to establish a sequence of weekly assignments as Duty Judge for such duties as described herein during the calendar year 2026. A schedule of such rotation shall be prepared, attached hereto, and become a part of this order. This duty shall be in addition to weekend First Appearance duties as assigned by the Chief Judge of the circuit.

2) The assigned Duty Judge shall be physically present in the courthouse, except for lunch or unforeseen circumstances, Monday through Friday, during normal working hours when the courthouse is open, to handle any matter necessary during the assigned week. The Duty Judge shall also be available to Hernando County after normal hours during his or her duty week. Court administration staff shall maintain an updated list of contact numbers for each judge. These phone numbers shall be used and distributed for judicial duties only. A duty week begins at 8:00 a.m. on Monday and lasts until 5:00 p.m. on Friday unless the holiday duty rotation dictates otherwise.

SHOULD ANY JUDGE HAVE SCHEDULING CONFLICTS FOR HIS OR HER ASSIGNED WEEKLY DUTY, IT SHALL BE HIS OR HER RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTACT ANOTHER JUDGE TO BE AVAILABLE. ANY SWITCHING OF SUCH DUTY JUDGE ASSIGNMENTS SHALL BE DONE IN WRITING WITH COPIES TO THE FOLLOWING: ALL JUDGES, CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT, STATE


DSM

**ATTORNEY, PUBLIC DEFENDER, HERNANDO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE,
GENERAL COUNSEL, AND FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HELPDESK.**

- 3) Nothing in this order shall preclude Judges from trading duty assignments or accepting responsibility for another Judge's duties by agreement, confirmed in writing.
- 4) Any County Court Judge who receives this duty is hereby assigned to act as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the Fifth Judicial Circuit should an emergency requiring the actions of a Circuit Judge arise during his or her duties. Likewise, any Circuit Court Judge who receives this duty is hereby assigned to act as a Judge of the County Court of Hernando County should an emergency requiring the actions of a County Judge arise during his or her duties.
- 5) The Administrative Judge, local Court Administration and the General Counsel shall at all times be kept advised, in writing, of all changes or modifications to the duty Judge schedule so they may maintain a master list of which Judge is responsible for coverage.

It is FURTHER ORDERED and ADJUDGED that this Order shall take effect at 12:01 a.m. January 1, 2026 and shall rescind and replace Administrative Order H-2024-50 at that time.

DONE and ORDERED in Chambers in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, this 15th day of December 2025.


Daniel B. Merritt, Jr
Chief Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2026

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE
January <i>New Years Day 1st Scaglione</i>	Dec 29 - Jan 2	Toner
<i>Judicial College 4-9</i>	Jan 5 – Jan 9	Bell
	Jan 12 – Jan 16	Merritt Jr.
<i>MLK 19th Vergara</i>	Jan 20 – Jan 23	Eineman
	Jan 26 – Jan 30	Hitzemann
February	Feb 2 – Feb 6	Barbee
	Feb 9 – Feb 13	Scaglione
	Feb 16 – Feb 20	Vergara
	Feb 23 – Feb 27	Toner
March	Mar 2 – Mar 6	Bell
<i>Judicial College 8-13</i>	Mar 9 – Mar 13	Merritt Jr.
	Mar 16 – Mar 20	Eineman
	Mar 23 – Mar 27	Barbee
April <i>Good Friday 3rd Spaight</i>	Mar 30 – Apr 2	Hitzemann
	Apr 6 – Apr 10	Scaglione
	Apr 13 – Apr 17	Vergara
	Apr 20 – Apr 24	New County Judge
May	Apr 27 – May 1	Toner
	May 4 – May 8	Bell
<i>May 9-10 New County Judge</i>	May 11 – May 15	Merritt Jr.

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2026

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE
	May 18 – May 22	Eineman
<i>Memorial Day 25th</i>	May 26 – May 29	Barbee
June	June 1 – June 5	Hitzemann
	June 8 – June 12	Scaglione
	June 15 – June 19	Vergara
	June 22 – June 26	New County Judge
July <i>Independence Day 3rd</i> <i>Daly</i>	June 29 – July 2	Toner
	July 6 – July 10	Scaglione
	July 13 – July 17	Merritt Jr.
<i>County Conference 21-23</i>	July 20 – July 24	Eineman
	July 27 – July 31	Barbee
August	Aug 3 – Aug 7	Hitzemann
<i>Circuit Conference</i>	Aug 10 – Aug 14	Bell
	Aug 17 – Aug 21	Vergara
	Aug 24 – Aug 28	New County Judge
September	Aug 31 – Sep 4	Toner
<i>Labor Day 7th</i> <i>Healis</i>	Sep 8 – Sep 11	Bell
	Sep 14 – Sep 18	Merritt Jr.
<i>Yom Kippur 21st</i> <i>Howard</i>	Sep 22 – Sep 25	Eineman
	Sep 28 – Oct 2	Barbee

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2026

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE
October	Oct 5 – Oct 9	Hitzemann
	Oct 12 – Oct 16	Scaglione
	Oct 19 – Oct 23	Vergara
	Oct 26 – Oct 30	New County Judge
November	Nov 2 – Nov 6	Toner
<i>Veteran's Day 11th</i> <i>Vergara</i>	Nov 9-10, Nov 12-13	Bell
	Nov 16 – Nov 20	Merritt Jr.
<i>Thanksgiving 26th-27th</i> <i>Daly</i>	Nov 23 – Nov 25	Eineman
December	Nov 30 – Dec 4	Barbee
	Dec 7 – Dec 11	Hitzemann
	Dec 14 – Dec 18	Scaglione
<i>Christmas 24th – 25th</i> <i>Bell</i>	Dec 21 – Dec 23	Vergara
<i>New Year's Eve 31st</i> <i>Hitzemann</i>	Dec 28-30, Jan 1	New County Judge