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

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER H-2026-37

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ASSIGNING DUTY JUDGE ROTATION FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2027

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 2027. 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 ATTORNEY, PUBLIC DEFENDER, HERNANDO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, GENERAL COUNSEL, AND FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HELPDESK.

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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, 2027, and shall rescind and replace Administrative Order H-2025-59-A at that time.

DONE and ORDERED in Chambers in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, this 10th day of November 2026.

Daniel B. Merritt, Jr
Chief Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2027

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE	CHANGES
January *Tri County Holiday & Wknd 1/1-1/3 Hitzemann*	**Dec 28-31,**	**Smith**	
Florida Judicial College Phase 1 1/3-1/8	**Jan 4 – Jan 8**	**Toner**	
	Jan 11 – Jan 15	**Bell**	
MLK January 18	**Jan 19 – Jan 22**	**Merritt Jr.**	
	Jan 25 – Jan 29	**Eineman**	
February	**Feb 1 – Feb 5**	**Barbee**	
	Feb 8 – Feb 12	**Hitzemann**	
Presidents' Day 2/15 Courthouse Closed	**Feb 15 – Feb 19**	**Scaglione**	
	Feb 22 – Feb 26	**New Circuit Judge**	
March	**Mar 1 – Mar 5**	**Smith**	
Florida Judicial College Phase II 3/7-3/12	**Mar 8 – Mar 12**	**Toner**	
	Mar 15 – Mar 19	**Bell**	
Good Friday March 26	**Mar 22 – Mar 25**	**Merritt Jr.**	
April	**Mar 29 – Apr 2**	**Eineman**	
	Apr 5 – Apr 9	**Barbee**	
	Apr 12 – Apr 16	**Hitzemann**	
	Apr 19 – Apr 23	**Scaglione**	
	Apr 26 – Apr 30	**New Circuit Judge**	
May	**May 3 – May 7**	**Smith**	
	May 10 – May 14	**Toner**	

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2027

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE	CHANGES
	May 17 – May 21	Bell	
	May 24 – May 28	Merritt Jr.	
June *Memorial Day May 31*	June 1– June 4	Eineman	
	June 7 – June 11	Barbee	
	June 14 – June 18	Hitzemann	
	June 21 – June 25	Scaglione	
July	June 28 – July 2	New Circuit Judge	
Observance of 4th of July July 5	July 6 – July 9	Smith	
County Judges' Conference 7/13-7/15	July 12 – July 16	Toner	
	July 19 – July 23	Bell	
	July 26 – July 30	Merritt Jr.	
August	Aug 2 – Aug 6	Eineman	
	Aug 9 – Aug 13	Barbee	
Circuit Judges' Conference 8/15-8/18	Aug 16 – Aug 20	Hitzemann	
	Aug 23 – Aug 27	Scaglione	
September	Aug 30 – Sep 3	New Circuit Judge	
Labor Day September 6	Sep 7 – Sep 10	Smith	
	Sep 13 – Sep 17	Toner	
	Sep 20 – Sep 24	Bell	
Rosh Hashannah October 1	Sep 27 – Sep 30	Merritt Jr.	

DUTY SCHEDULE FOR 2027

MONTH	WEEK OF	JUDGE	CHANGES
October	**Oct 4 – Oct 8**	**Eineman**	
Yom Kippur October 11	**Oct 12 – Oct 15**	**Barbee**	
	Oct 18 – Oct 22	**Hitzemann**	
	Oct 25 – Oct 29	**Scaglione**	
November	**Nov 1 – Nov 5**	**New Circuit Judge**	
Veterans' Day November 11	**Nov 8 – Nov 12**	**Smith**	
	Nov 15 – Nov 19	**Toner**	
Thanksgiving November 25 &26	**Nov 22 – Nov 24**	**Bell**	
December	**Nov 29 – Dec 3**	**Merritt Jr.**	
	Dec 6 – Dec 10	**Eineman**	
	Dec 13 – Dec 17	**Barbee**	
Christmas Holiday December 23 & 24	**Dec 20 – Dec 22**	**Hitzemann**	
Christmas Holiday December 27	**Dec 28 – Dec 30**	**Scaglione**	