

2026-05-28

**OBJECTS AND REASONS**

This Bill would amend the *Supreme Court of Judicature Act*, Cap. 117A to

- (a) increase the number of judges in the High Court;
- (b) establish a Firearms Division of the High Court; and
- (c) provide for related matters.

*Arrangement of Sections*

1. Short title
2. Amendment of section 4 of Cap. 117A
3. Amendment of section 15 of Cap. 117A
4. Insertion of sections 27A, 27B, 27C, 27D, 27E, 27F, 27G, 27H, 27I, 27J and 27K into Cap. 117A
5. Commencement

## **BARBADOS**

A Bill entitled

An Act to amend the *Supreme Court of Judicature Act*, Cap. 117A to

- (a) increase the number of Judges in the High Court;
- (b) establish a Firearms Division of the High Court; and
- (c) provide for related matters.

ENACTED by the Parliament of Barbados as follows:

**Short title**

**1.** This Act may be cited as the *Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act, 2026*.

**Amendment of section 4 of Cap. 117A**

**2.** *Section 4 of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act, Cap. 117A, in this Act referred to as the principal Act, is amended by deleting subsection (1) and substituting the following:*

- “(1) The High Court consists of
- (a) the Chief Justice, *ex officio*; and
  - (b) not more than 15 judges to be styled “Judges of the High Court”.”.

**Amendment of section 15 of Cap. 117A**

**3.** *Section 15 of the principal Act is amended by deleting subsection (1) and substituting the following:*

- “(1) There shall be five divisions of the High Court, namely
- (a) a Civil Division;
  - (b) a Criminal Division;
  - (c) a Commercial Division;
  - (d) a Family Division; and
  - (e) a Firearms Division.”.

**Insertion of sections 27A, 27B, 27C, 27D, 27E, 27F, 27G, 27H, 27I, 27J and 27K into Cap. 117A**

**4.** *The principal Act is amended by inserting the following new sections after section 27:*

*“Firearms Jurisdiction*

**Definitions applicable to sections 27A to 27K**

**27A.** For the purposes of sections 27A to 27K,

“child” has the meaning assigned to it under section 2 of the *Child Protection Act* (Act 2024-17);

“firearm” shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 2(1) of the *Firearms Act*, Cap. 179;

“firearm-related matter” includes the following:

- (a) a firearm charge matter; and
- (b) any firearm-related offence; and

“firearm-related offence” means

- (a) any offence contrary to the *Firearms Act*, Cap. 179; or
- (b) any offence involving a firearm.

**Firearms Court**

**27B.(1)** There is established the Firearms Division of the High Court to be known as the Firearms Court.

(2) The Firearms Court shall have jurisdiction in all firearm-related offences.

- (3) The Firearms Court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine the following:
- (a) all firearm-related offences; and
  - (b) any other related offences which the Chief Justice may assign to that Court.

**Authority and jurisdiction firearm-related matters exercisable by the Firearms Court**

**27C.(1)** On the commencement of this Act, authority and jurisdiction in all firearm-related matters exercisable by the High Court and Magistrate's Courts, shall be exercisable by the Firearms Court.

(2) The question whether any cause, matter or proceeding is a firearm-related matter within the jurisdiction of the Firearms Court under this section shall be decided by the Firearms Court.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of this section, there shall be vested in the Firearms Division of the High Court all the like powers and authorities as are vested in the Supreme Court and a Judge thereof and, for the purposes of this Act, a Supreme Court Judge exercising jurisdiction in that Division in relation to any offence shall have all the powers of a Judge.

(4) In any proceedings under a related enactment, a reference to the "High Court", "Magistrate's Court", "Court of Summary Jurisdiction" or "Court" shall, in relation to a firearm-related matter, be read and construed as a reference to the "Firearms Court".

**Assignment of Judges to Firearms Court**

**27D.** The Chief Justice may assign to the Firearms Court, such Judges, who are suitable to adjudicate in firearm-related matters.

**Judge in Firearms Court to have the powers of a Magistrate**

**27E.(1)** When sitting in the Firearms Court, a Judge shall, in addition to the powers conferred under this Act, have all the powers exercisable by a Magistrate in firearm-related matters under

- (a) the *Magistrate's Courts Act*, Cap. 116A; or
- (b) any other enactment.

(2) Upon determining a case, the Court shall have all such power to punish the offender as is provided by any enactment in relation to such a case or any such offender.

**Sittings of the Firearms Court**

**27F.(1)** Sittings of the Firearms Court shall be held at such locations and at such times as the Chief Justice, in consultation with a Judge of the Firearms Court, may appoint, in accordance with this Act.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Firearms Court may, when required and appropriate, sit at any time, and may conduct hearings by telephone, video conference or other appropriate electronic means.

(3) Without prejudice to the foregoing, upon commencement of this Act, the jurisdiction in firearm-related matters previously exercised in a Magistrate's Court, shall continue to be exercised in those Courts until the Chief Justice directs otherwise.

(4) Without prejudice to the foregoing, upon commencement of this Act, the jurisdiction in firearm-related matters previously exercised in the High Court shall continue to be exercised in those Courts until the Chief Justice directs otherwise.

**Special powers of the Firearms Court**

**28G.** Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Act or any other enactment, the provisions of the *Child Protection Act, 2024*

(Act 2024-17) and *Child Justice Act, 2024* (Act 2024-18) or any relevant enactment shall apply in the case of a child.

### **Rules**

**28H.** In any firearm-related matter before the Firearms Court, the relevant Rules of Court shall apply.

### **Referrals**

**28I.(1)** A magistrate before whom any case involving a firearm offence is brought shall forthwith transfer such case for trial by the Firearms Court and the record shall be endorsed accordingly, but no objection to any proceedings shall be taken or allowed on the ground that any case has not been so transferred.

(2) A magistrate before whom any case involving a firearm offence is brought if the offence is not murder or treason, may make such enquiry as he deems necessary in order to ascertain whether the offence charged is within his jurisdiction and can be adequately punished by him under his powers, and thereupon either

(a) based on committal proceedings, make an order that the accused person shall be committed to stand trial in the Firearms Court; or

(b) direct that the case be forthwith transferred for trial by the Firearms Court.

(3) For the purposes of this Act, a Judge sitting without or with a jury shall constitute the High Court Division of the Firearms Court.

(4) Without prejudice to the foregoing, the Chief Justice may, by order, regulate any other arrangements for the reference to, and trial of, cases in any such division and any such order may contain such consequential, supplementary or ancillary provisions as appear to the Chief Justice to be necessary or expedient.

(5) Where the Firearms Court is constituted pursuant to this section, the officers of the Court shall, for that purpose, be regarded and treated as having been assigned to the Firearms Court.

(6) The Firearms Court may, if it is satisfied that the requirements of justice render it expedient so to do, transfer any case brought before it to such other court, having jurisdiction in the matter, as may be appropriate; and the record shall be endorsed accordingly.

(7) Nothing in this section shall be construed as obliging a magistrate to remand any person in custody.

#### **Transfer of matters**

**28J.** Where in proceedings before any other Court the Firearms Court is of the view that the elements of the matter make it desirable that the matter be dealt with by such other Court, the Firearms Court may transfer such matter to be adjudicated upon by such other Court.

#### **Savings provision**

**28K.** Nothing in the foregoing provisions of this Act shall be construed to divest any court of any jurisdiction or preclude the trial of a firearm-related matter by the Court.”.

#### **Commencement**

**5.** *This Act shall come into operation on a date fixed by proclamation.*

Read three times and passed the House of Assembly this  
day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

**Speaker**

Read three times and passed the Senate this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
\_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

**President**