

## CHAPTER 181

AN ACT concerning central municipal courts and amending N.J.S.2B:12-1 and P.L.1981, c.178.

**BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. N.J.S.2B:12-1 is amended to read as follows:

Establishment of municipal courts.

2B:12-1. Establishment of municipal courts.

a. Every municipality shall establish a municipal court. If a municipality fails to maintain a municipal court or does not enter into an agreement pursuant to subsection b. or c. of this section, the Assignment Judge of the vicinage shall order violations occurring within its boundaries heard in any other municipal court in the county until such time as the municipality establishes and maintains a municipal court. The municipality without a municipal court shall be responsible for all administrative costs specified in the order of the Assignment Judge pending the establishment of its municipal court.

b. Two or more municipalities, by ordinance, may enter into an agreement establishing a single joint municipal court and providing for its administration. A copy of the agreement shall be filed with the Administrative Director of the Courts. As used in this act, "municipal court" includes a joint municipal court.

c. Two or more municipalities, by ordinance or resolution, may agree to provide jointly for courtrooms, chambers, equipment, supplies and employees for their municipal courts and agree to appoint judges and administrators without establishing a joint municipal court. Where municipal courts share facilities in this manner, the identities of the individual courts shall continue to be expressed in the captions of orders and process.

d. An agreement pursuant to subsection b. or c. of this section may be terminated as provided in the agreement. If the agreement makes no provision for termination, it may be terminated by any party with reasonable notices and terms as determined by the Assignment Judge of the vicinage.

e. Any county of the first class with a population of over 825,000 and a population density of less than 4,000 persons per square mile according to the latest federal decennial census, with a county police department and force established in accordance with N.J.S.40A:14-106 or a county park police system established in accordance with P.L.1960, c.135 (C.40:37-261 et seq.), may establish, by ordinance, a central municipal court, which shall be an inferior court of limited jurisdiction, to adjudicate cases filed by agents of the county health department, agents of the county office of consumer affairs, members of the county police department and force or county park police system, or other cases within its jurisdiction referred by the vicinage Assignment Judge pursuant to the Rules of Court, and provide for its administration. A copy of that ordinance shall be filed with the Administrative Director of the Courts. As used in this act, "municipal court" includes a central municipal court.

2. Section 1 of P.L.1981, c.178 (C.56:8-14.1) is amended to read as follows:

C.56:8-14.1 Office of consumer affairs entitled to penalties, fines or fees.

1. In any action in a court of appropriate jurisdiction initiated by the director of any certified county or municipal office of consumer affairs, the office of consumer affairs shall be entitled, if successful in the action, to such penalties, fines or fees as may be authorized

pursuant to chapter 8 of Title 56 of the Revised Statutes and awarded by the court, and to the reasonable costs of any such action, including investigative and legal costs, as may be filed with and approved by the court. Such costs shall be in addition to the taxed costs authorized in successful proceedings under the Rules Governing the Courts of the State of New Jersey.

As used in this section, "court of appropriate jurisdiction" includes a municipal court in the municipality where the offense was committed or where the defendant may be found and a central municipal court in the county where the offense was committed or where the defendant may be found. However, the term shall not include a municipal court in a city of the first class if the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court approves a recommendation submitted by the assignment judge of the vicinage in which the court is located to exempt that court from such jurisdiction.

All moneys collected pursuant to this section shall be paid to the officer lawfully charged with the custody of the general funds of the county or municipality.

3. This act shall take effect on the 60th day after enactment.

Approved January 17, 2012.