DIGEST

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HB 502 Engrossed   2025 Regular Session   Butler

Abstract: Provides for grounds for removal of a registrar of voters; for removal procedures when the commissioner of elections raises allegations of conduct subject to removal; for a firing freeze during the pendency of a removal; for evaluations of registrars, chief deputies, and confidential assistants; for pay increases for registrars, chief deputies, and confidential assistants; and for requirements of a registrar upon the closure of the registrar's office in certain circumstances.

Present law provides the grounds for which a registrar of voters may be removed by the State Board of Election Supervisors (state board), including willful misconduct relating to his official duty, willful and persistent failure to perform his duty, persistent public conduct prejudicial to the administration of the laws relative to the registration of voters that brings the office into disrepute, and conviction of a felony.

Proposed law retains present law and provides additional grounds for removal to include incompetence, consistent under-performance, abuse of leave policies established by the secretary of state, violation of substance abuse policies established by the secretary of state, or a finding of "unsuccessful" on a merit evaluation for two successive years.

Present law provides that if the state board receives a resolution from a parish governing authority accusing the parish registrar of any conduct that is grounds for removal, the state board shall schedule a hearing on the accusations contained in the resolution within 30 days of the receipt of such resolution.

Proposed law retains present law and further provides that if the commissioner of elections raises allegations that the parish registrar has engaged in any conduct that is grounds for removal, the state board shall schedule a hearing on the allegations brought by the commissioner of elections within 30 days of the receipt of the accusations. If the commissioner of elections serves as a regular member of the state board, he shall not serve for the purposes of such hearings and the secretary of state shall designate a member of the Registrars of Voters Association (association) to serve in the commissioner's place and shall notify the state board in writing of any such designation.

Present law provides for 12 salary levels for registrars, chief deputies, and confidential assistants. Provides that each registrar, chief deputy, and confidential assistant whose salary is at the level of step one or higher shall be evaluated as to merit in January. Provides that criteria and procedures for evaluation of registrars are determined by the secretary of state in conjunction with the association and that a registrar is evaluated by the secretary of state. Provides that criteria and

procedures for evaluation of chief deputies and confidential assistants are determined by the association and that a chief deputy or confidential assistant is evaluated by the registrar. Requires an evaluation of "excellent" to receive a salary increase to the next step.

Proposed law retains present law and further provides that merit evaluations shall result in a finding of "excellent", "successful", "unsuccessful", or "not assessed".

Proposed law further provides that upon a finding of "excellent" on a merit evaluation of a registrar, chief deputy, or confidential assistant whose salary is at the level of step 12, the registrar, chief deputy, or confidential assistant shall receive an annual salary increase of 5%. Provides that no registrar, chief deputy, or confidential assistant shall receive more than five such annual salary increases.

Present law provides for a Voter Registration Administrators' Certification Program providing certification for registrars, chief deputies, and confidential assistants that meet certain educational and experience requirements. Provides that a registrar, chief deputy, or confidential assistant that receives such certification shall be granted a 7% increase in his annual salary.

Proposed law provides that the additional 7% increase shall not apply to the 5% annual increase provided for in proposed law.

Present law provides that, subject to applicable civil service law, a registrar may remove any deputy, clerk, or other employee.

Proposed law retains present law, except to provide that no registrar who is subject to removal by the state board may remove a deputy registrar, confidential assistant, or other employee from the time the registrar is made aware that he is subject to removal until after the state board makes a final determination on the removal of the registrar.

Present law provides that a registrar shall keep his principal office open for business on those days that state departments are open.

Proposed law retains present law and further provides that a registrar may close his principal office on days that state departments are open only in extreme circumstances. However, on such days the registrar shall still perform essential functions.

(Amends R.S. 18:53(A) and (B)(1) and (2), 55(A)(4)(b), 59(B)(4)(b) and (C)(4)(b), 60, and 134(A))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

    The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs to the original bill:

1.   Provide for a finding of "not assessed", rather than "unrated", as it relates to evaluations of registrars, chief deputies, and confidential assistants.

2.   Specify that the salary increase provided for in <u>proposed law</u> is provided annually, and does not serve as a basis for the additional salary increase provided in <u>present law</u> to certified registrars, deputy registrars, and confidential assistants.