

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

HB 20

2021 Regular Session

Miguez

Present law provides relative to payment of costs related to conducting elections, including payment of costs of ballots and election materials, of publication of the location of polling places, of renting polling places, of drayage, of setting up voting machines, of compensating commissioners and deputy parish custodians, of transmitting election returns, and of other election-related costs incurred by registrars of voters, clerks of court, the secretary of state, and the parish board of election supervisors. Present law further specifies that election expenses are shared on a prorated basis by the state and local governments from funds appropriated to the secretary of state for that purpose.

Proposed law would have provided that no state or local official or agency responsible for conducting elections could solicit, accept, use, or dispose of any donation from individuals or corporations for the purpose of paying costs related to conducting elections. Proposed law would have provided that the prohibition did not apply to campaign contributions, to the donation of private property for use as a polling place, or to the donation or use of equipment for the restoration and maintenance of utilities to a precinct or polling place in the event of an outage.

(Proposed to add R.S. 18:1400.10)

VETO MESSAGE: In addition to the reasons discussed in my veto of this same bill last year, there are a few additional reasons for my veto this year. First, this version is more expansive than the bill last year which provided for limitations only on elections conducted during an emergency. The bill this year, inexplicably, expands this to all elections. Secondly, like the bill last year, this legislation would prevent all forms of donations, no matter how good the intentions, to local elections officials. Thus, while in committee there was overheated rhetoric about the motivations of social media companies trying to influence elections, this bill would also likely prevent the local VFW from providing donuts for election workers on election day. Lastly, and ironically, the Legislative appropriations bill, House Bill 695, passed without a single vote in opposition, provides that the "legislature is hereby expressly authorized to receive and expend any monies received as a result of any grants or donations or other forms of assistance as provided for in Article VII, Section 9(A)(1) of the Louisiana Constitution of 1974." Thus, the Legislature is reserving for itself the ability to receive and spend grants and donations while attempting to outlaw the same for other public bodies. The author made no effort to eliminate this provision from House Bill 695 nor to explain why the Legislature is somehow immune from the improper influence of grants and donations that he fears would end up corrupting local election officials.