
DIGEST

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HB 499 Original

2023 Regular Session

Gaines

Abstract: Creates the River Parishes Economic Sustainability District.

Proposed law creates the River Parishes Economic Sustainability District (district) as a body politic and political subdivision of the state of La.

Proposed law provides that the district is established for the primary object and purpose of promoting and encouraging environmentally sustainable development to stimulate the economy through commerce, technologies, industry, and research.

Proposed law provides that the boundaries of the district will be coterminous with the boundaries of St James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Charles parishes.

Proposed law provides that the district will be governed by a board of commissioners comprised of the following eighteen members:

- (1) The governor or his designee.
- (2) The chairman of the Port of South La. or his designee.
- (3) A representative of the local governing authority for St. James Parish, appointed by the local governing authority.
- (4) A representative of the local governing authority for St. John the Baptist Parish, appointed by the local governing authority.
- (5) A representative of the local governing authority for St. Charles Parish, appointed by the local governing authority.
- (6) One member appointed by the president of Tulane University and specializing in environmental sustainability.
- (7) The president of the Southern University System or his designee.
- (8) The chancellor of the River Parishes Community College or his designee.
- (9) One member appointed by the state senator for Senate District 2.

- (10) One member appointed by the state senator for Senate District 18.
- (11) One member appointed by the state senator for Senate District 19.
- (12) The executive director of the River Region Chamber of Commerce or his designee, which may include a private sector representative of the banking industry.
- (13) The executive director of the River Parishes Tourist Commission or his designee.
- (14) The president and CEO of Greater New Orleans, Inc. or his designee.
- (15) A private sector representative of the maritime community appointed by the Port of South La.
- (16) A private sector representative of the hospitality industry appointed by the River Parishes Tourist Commission.
- (17) A representative from New Orleans & Company appointed by New Orleans & Company.
- (18) The secretary of La. Economic Development or his designee as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

Proposed law provides for the terms of board members, vacancies on the board, compensation of board members, ethical prohibitions, election of officers, and the hiring of a district director.

Proposed law establishes the rights and powers of the district, including:

- (1) To sue and be sued.
- (2) To adopt, use, and alter at will a corporate seal.
- (3) To acquire property by means other than expropriation and to hold and use any franchise or property for carrying out the objects and purposes of the district, including but not limited to the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a board office and research facility.
- (4) To enter into contracts for the purchase, acquisition, construction, and improvement of works and facilities.
- (5) To incur debt and to issue bonds, certificates, notes, and other evidence of indebtedness.
- (6) To regulate the imposition of fees and rentals charged by the district for its facilities and services rendered by it.
- (7) To borrow money and pledge all or part of its revenues, leases, rents, or other advantages as security for such loans.

- (8) To appoint officers, agents, and employees, prescribe their duties, and fix their compensation.
- (9) To seek, apply for, and receive donations, financial assistance, or public or private grants or investors.
- (10) To create and operate tourism recovery and improvement districts.
- (11) To enter into agreements with other governmental agencies to further the mission of the district.
- (12) To enter into public private partnerships when necessary to carry out the mission of the district.
- (13) To lend or distribute funds through a revolving loan or grant program in accordance with applicable laws.
- (14) To contract for professional services, including economic and business consultation, accounting and audit services, legal services, and related regional industrial development consultation.

Proposed law provides that the district will be subject to laws regarding to open meetings, public records, fiscal agents, official journals, dual officeholding and employment, public bid law, the Code of Governmental Ethics, the right to property, and the La. Election Code.

Proposed law authorizes the district to adopt a program for preferential treatment and set-asides for businesses owned and operated by socially or economically disadvantaged persons.

Proposed law requires that the financial records of the district be subjected to audit by the legislative auditor.

(Adds R.S. 33:130.881-130.886)