
DIGEST

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Harrison

HB No. 127

Abstract: Makes the office of state superintendent of education an elective rather than an appointed office. Provides for election of the superintendent beginning with the 2015 election of statewide elected officials. Requires that the superintendent have the qualifications and salary of statewide elected officials.

Present constitution (Const. Art. VIII, §2) provides for a superintendent of education for public elementary and secondary education who, subject to provisions for appointment in lieu of election in Const. Art. IV, §20, shall be elected for a term of four years. Provides that if the office is made appointive, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) shall make the appointment. Provides that the superintendent is the administrative head of the Dept. of Education and shall implement BESE policies and the laws affecting schools under its jurisdiction. Provides that the qualifications and other powers, functions, duties, and responsibilities of the superintendent shall be provided by law. Present constitution (Const. Art. IV, §20) authorizes the legislature to provide, by law enacted by 2/3 of the elected members of each house, for appointment, in lieu of election, of the superintendent of education. Authorizes the legislature, by law enacted by two-thirds of the elected members of each house, to reestablish such office as elective and, in that event, requires the legislature to prescribe qualifications. (Note: Act No. 444 of 1985 provided for the appointment of the superintendent of education.)

Present law (R.S. 17:21) provides for the superintendent of education for public elementary and secondary education and provides that he shall execute and implement BESE policies and programs and serve as the administrative head of the Dept. of Education. Provides that he shall have other powers, functions, duties, and responsibilities as provided by law and possess qualifications adopted by BESE rule.

Proposed law removes the provision that the superintendent possess qualifications adopted by BESE rule. Requires instead that he have the qualifications required by Const. Art. IV, §2 for statewide elected officials. (Const. Art. IV, §2 provides that such an official, by the date of his qualification as a candidate, shall be age 25, be an elector, and have been a La. and U.S. citizen for at least the preceding five years. Prohibits a statewide elected official from holding other public office except by virtue of his elected office.)

Present law requires that the superintendent be appointed by a 2/3 vote of the total BESE membership. Requires BESE to enter into a contract with the appointed superintendent with the contract length to be determined by BESE, not to extend past the end of the term of office of the BESE members making the appointment, except permits the contract to provide that the

superintendent may serve until the succeeding board has made an appointment. Provides that a vacancy in the office of superintendent occurring before expiration of the term of his contract be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by appointment.

Proposed law provides instead that the superintendent shall be elected by the state's electors for a four-year term at the election for statewide elected officials and legislators.

Present law provides that the superintendent's salary be set by BESE subject to approval of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget. Present law (R.S. 36:10) provides for a \$115,000 salary for statewide elected officials, except the governor.

Proposed law makes the salary of statewide elected officials applicable to the superintendent.

Proposed law requires the state superintendent to appoint a first assistant as provided in Const. Art. IV, §13, to serve at the pleasure of the state superintendent. Provides that the first assistant fill a vacancy in the office of state superintendent as provided by Const. Art. IV, §16. Requires the first assistant to serve as deputy state superintendent of education.

Proposed law (R.S. 36:643(A) and 646, Executive Reorganization Act) makes the office of deputy state superintendent of education mandatory rather than permissive and provides that the first assistant to the state superintendent appointed pursuant to Const. Art. IV, §13 shall be the deputy state superintendent of education. Removes provisions of present law that require the state superintendent to designate the deputy superintendent of management and finance or the deputy superintendent of district support to serve in his absence if a deputy state superintendent of education is not appointed.

Proposed law specifies that proposed law is enacted pursuant to authority of the legislature in Const. Art. IV, §20 to provide by law enacted by 2/3 of the elected members of each house that the office of superintendent of education shall be an elective office.

Proposed law retains present law that provides that, if the office of state superintendent of education is made appointive pursuant to Const. Art. IV, §20, the appointment shall be subject to Senate confirmation.

Provisions for qualifications and election of the superintendent are effective when qualifying opens for election to statewide elective office in 2015 solely for purposes of qualification of candidates and election of a superintendent at the 2015 election. Provisions are effective for all other purposes and for subsequent elections at noon on January 11, 2016. Implementing provisions are effective Aug. 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 17:21(B)(2), (C), and (D) and R.S. 36:643(A) and 646; Adds R.S. 17:23)