

2018 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 401

BY SENATOR MIZELL AND REPRESENTATIVE WHITE

SCHOOLS. Creates a commission to study the feasibility of consolidating the Washington Parish and Bogalusa City school systems. (8/1/18)

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 17:1381, relative to the consolidation of school systems; to create a

3 commission to study the feasibility of consolidating the Bogalusa City and

4 Washington Parish school systems; to provide for the membership, meetings, and

5 duties and responsibilities of the commission; to provide for reporting; to provide for

6 a public hearing; to provide for termination of the commission; and to provide for

7 related matters.

8 Notice of intention to introduce this Act has been published.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 17:1381 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

11 **§1381. Washington Parish and Bogalusa City school systems; consolidation**

12 **study commission; creation; membership; duties and**

13 **responsibilities**

14 **A. The Bogalusa/Washington School System Consolidation Commission**

15 **is hereby created for the purpose of studying the feasibility of consolidating the**

16 **Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School System.**

17 **B. The commission shall consist of the following members:**

- 1 **(1) The president of the Bogalusa City School Board.**
- 2 **(2) The superintendent of the Bogalusa City School System.**
- 3 **(3) The president of the Washington Parish School Board.**
- 4 **(4) The superintendent of the Washington Parish School System.**
- 5 **(5) The mayor of the City of Bogalusa.**
- 6 **(6) The mayor of the City of Franklinton.**
- 7 **(7) The president of Washington Parish, or his designee.**
- 8 **(8) The president of the Bogalusa Chamber of Commerce or his**
- 9 **designee, who shall be a member of the chamber.**
- 10 **(9) The president of the Franklinton Chamber of Commerce or his**
- 11 **designee, who shall be a member of the chamber.**
- 12 **(10) One parent of a child enrolled in a school in the Bogalusa City**
- 13 **School System, appointed by the president of the Bogalusa City School Board.**
- 14 **(11) One parent of a child enrolled in a school in the Washington Parish**
- 15 **School System, appointed by the president of the Washington Parish School**
- 16 **Board.**
- 17 **(12) Three parents who have a child enrolled in a public school in either**
- 18 **the Bogalusa City School System or the Washington Parish School System, one**
- 19 **appointed by the state representative who represents House District No. 75, one**
- 20 **appointed by the state representative who represents House District No. 74, and**
- 21 **one appointed by the state senator who represents Senate District No. 12.**
- 22 **(13) One teacher who teaches at a school in the Bogalusa City School**
- 23 **System or the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana**
- 24 **Federation of Teachers.**
- 25 **(14) One teacher who teaches at a school in the Bogalusa City School**
- 26 **System or the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana**
- 27 **Association of Educators.**
- 28 **(15) One principal of a school in the Bogalusa City School System or the**
- 29 **Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana Association of**

1 **Principals.**

2 **(16) One minister who resides within the geographic boundaries of the**
3 **Bogalusa City School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.**

4 **(17) One minister who resides within the geographic boundaries of the**
5 **Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.**

6 **(18) The state representative who represents House District No. 75.**

7 **(19) The state representative who represents House District No. 74.**

8 **(20) The state senator who represents Senate District No. 12.**

9 **C. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation or a**
10 **per diem for their services or attendance at commission meetings.**

11 **D. The members of the commission shall elect such officers and create**
12 **such subcommittees as they deem necessary to fulfill the commission's duties**
13 **and responsibilities.**

14 **E.(1) The president of the Bogalusa City School Board and the president**
15 **of the Washington Parish School Board shall jointly call the first meeting, which**
16 **shall be held no later than September 1, 2018. The commission shall meet at**
17 **least monthly, but additional meetings may be called by the chairman or upon**
18 **request of a majority of the members of the commission.**

19 **(2)(a) All meetings of the commission shall be held in accordance with**
20 **the Open Meetings Law and official minutes and records of all meetings shall**
21 **be kept.**

22 **(b) All documents and proceedings of the commission shall be posted on**
23 **the website of the Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish**
24 **School System.**

25 **(3) A majority of the membership of the commission shall constitute a**
26 **quorum for the transaction of business.**

27 **F. The commission shall be domiciled in Franklinton, Louisiana, but the**
28 **meeting site shall alternate between the City of Bogalusa and the City of**
29 **Franklinton.**

1 **G. The Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School**

2 **System shall provide staff support and resources to the commission.**

3 **H. The commission shall:**

4 **(1) Determine the feasibility of consolidating the Bogalusa City School**
5 **System and the Washington Parish School System, thereby creating a unified**
6 **school district, the geographic boundaries of which shall be coterminous with**
7 **the geographic boundaries of Washington Parish.**

8 **(2) If the commission determines that consolidating the two school**
9 **systems is in the best interest of the students in each respective school system**
10 **and the parish as a whole, the commission shall formulate a plan and timeline**
11 **to effect the consolidation. Such plan, at a minimum, shall provide for:**

12 **(a) Passage of a resolution by each school board calling for an election**
13 **to gain voter approval of the consolidation in accordance with Article VIII,**
14 **Section 10(C) of the Constitution of Louisiana and R.S. 17:1379.**

15 **(b) The establishment and composition of a school board for the**
16 **consolidated school system, including the election and qualification of members**
17 **and apportionment of the districts of board members, all in accordance with**
18 **applicable state law.**

19 **(c) The establishment and membership of an interim school board to**
20 **ensure a coordinated, collaborative, and seamless transition of governance and**
21 **provision of educational services to all students until a new school board is**
22 **created and elected.**

23 **(d) Contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding that might**
24 **be needed to effect the consolidation.**

25 **(e) Any federal court order, judgement, or consent decree in effect.**

26 **(f) Policies and processes to address:**

27 **(i) Governance and administration of the school system and schools.**

28 **(ii) Financial matters, including existing tax structure, taxing districts,**
29 **bond issues, and debt, and the creation of a budget for the consolidated school**

1 system.

2 (iii) Transfer of buildings, facilities, and moveable and immoveable
3 property owned by each respective school system.

4 (iv) Number of schools and grade distribution within the schools.

5 (v) Curriculum and instruction.

6 (vi) Student enrollment.

7 (vii) Student transportation.

8 (viii) Teachers and other school personnel.

9 (ix) Data management.

10 (x) Any other issues or considerations identified by the commission.

11 I.(1) The commission shall submit a written report of its findings,
12 conclusions, and recommendations to the Bogalusa City School Board and the
13 Washington Parish School Board not later than August 31, 2019.

14 (2) Prior to adoption of the final report, the commission shall hold a
15 public hearing on its findings, recommendations, and plans developed for
16 consolidating the two school systems. The commission shall publish public
17 notice of the meeting in a newspaper with parish-wide circulation at least
18 twenty days prior to the hearing and a copy of the report shall be made
19 available for public inspection prior to the hearing.

20 (3) The final report shall be posted on the website of both school systems
21 in a manner that provides easy access to the report by parents and the public.

22 J. The commission shall terminate on September 1, 2019.

23 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
24 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
25 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
26 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
27 effective on the day following such approval.

- (14) One teacher who teaches at a school in the Bogalusa City School System or the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana Association of Educators.
- (15) One principal of a school in the Bogalusa City School System or the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana Association of Principals.
- (16) One minister who resides within the geographic boundaries of the Bogalusa City School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.
- (17) One minister who resides within the geographic boundaries of the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.
- (18) The state representative who represents House District No. 75.
- (19) The state representative who represents House District No. 74.
- (20) The state senator who represents Senate District No. 12.

With respect to the commission, proposed law provides that:

- (1) Members shall serve without compensation or a per diem.
- (2) Members shall elect officers and create subcommittees as deemed necessary.
- (3) The presidents of the Bogalusa City and Washington Parish school systems shall jointly call the first meeting of the commission by Sept. 1, 2018.
- (4) The commission shall meet monthly, but may hold additional meetings upon the call of the chair or request of a majority of commission members.
- (5) Commission meetings shall be held in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.
- (6) All documents and proceedings of the commission shall be posted on each school system's website.
- (7) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.
- (8) The commission shall be domiciled in Franklinton, LA but the meeting site shall alternate between the City of Bogalusa and the City of Franklinton.
- (9) Each school system shall provide staff support and resources to the commission.

Proposed law provides that the commission shall determine the feasibility of consolidating the Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School System with geographic boundaries coterminous with the geographic boundaries of Washington Parish.

Proposed law provides that if the commission determines that consolidating the two school systems is in the best interest of the students in each school system and the parish as a whole, the commission shall formulate a plan and timeline to effect the consolidation.

Proposed law provides that the plan to consolidate the two school systems shall, at a minimum, provide for:

- (1) Passage of a resolution by each school board calling for an election to gain voter approval of the consolidation in accordance with applicable constitutional and statutory provisions.

- (2) Establishment and composition of a school board for the consolidated school system, including the election and qualification of members and apportionment of the districts of board members.
- (3) Establishment and membership of an interim school board to govern the system until a new school board is created and elected.
- (4) Contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding needed to effect the consolidation.
- (5) Any federal court order, judgement, or consent decree in effect.
- (6) Policies and processes to address:
 - (a) Governance and administration of the school system and schools.
 - (b) Financial matters, including existing tax structure, taxing districts, bond issues, and debt, and the creation of a budget for the consolidated school system.
 - (c) Transfer of buildings, facilities, and moveable and immoveable property owned by each respective school system.
 - (d) Number of schools and grade distribution within the schools.
 - (e) Curriculum and instruction.
 - (f) Student enrollment.
 - (g) Student transportation.
 - (h) Teachers and other school personnel.
 - (i) Data management.
 - (j) Any other issues or considerations identified by the commission.

Proposed law requires the commission to submit a written report of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Bogalusa City School Board and the Washington Parish School Board not later than August 31, 2019.

Proposed law requires the commission to hold a public hearing on its findings, recommendations, and plans developed for consolidating the two school systems, prior to adoption of the final report.

Proposed law provides that the final report shall be posted on the website of both school systems in a manner that provides easy access to the report by parents and the public.

Proposed law provides that the commission shall terminate on September 1, 2019.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:1381)