

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 663

BY REPRESENTATIVE WHITE AND SENATOR MIZELL

SCHOOLS/DISTRICTS: Creates a commission to study the feasibility of consolidating the Washington Parish and Bogalusa school systems

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 as provided by Article III, Section 13 of the Constitution of
10 Louisiana.

11 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

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

13 §1381. Washington Parish and Bogalusa City school systems; consolidation study
14 commission; creation; membership; duties and responsibilities

15 A. The Bogalusa/Washington School System Consolidation Commission is
16 hereby created for the purpose of studying the feasibility of consolidating the
17 Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School System.

18 B. The commission shall consist of the following members:

19 (1) The president of the Bogalusa City School Board.

20 (2) The superintendent of the Bogalusa City School System.

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

1 (17) One member of the clergy who resides within the geographic boundaries
2 of the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.

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

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

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

6 (21) The director of finance for the Bogalusa City School Board.

7 (22) The director of finance for the Washington Parish School Board.

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

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

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

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

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

23 (3) A majority of the membership of the commission shall constitute a
24 quorum for the transaction of business.

25 F. The commission shall be domiciled in Franklinton, Louisiana, but the
26 meeting site shall alternate between the City of Bogalusa and the City of Franklinton.

27 G. The Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School
28 System shall provide staff support and resources to the commission.

29 H. The commission shall:

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

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

9 (a) Passage of a resolution by each school board calling for an election to
10 gain voter approval of the consolidation in accordance with Article VIII, Section
11 10(C) of the Constitution of Louisiana and R.S. 17:1379.

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

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

19 (d) Contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding that might be
20 needed to effect the consolidation.

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

22 (f) Policies and processes to address:

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

24 (ii) Financial matters, including existing tax structure, taxing districts, bond
25 issues, and debt, and the creation of a budget for the consolidated school system.

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

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

29 (v) Curriculum and instruction.

- 1 (vi) Student enrollment.
- 2 (vii) Student transportation.
- 3 (viii) Teachers and other school personnel.
- 4 (ix) Data management.
- 5 (x) Any other issues or considerations identified by the commission.

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

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

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

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

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

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 663 Reengrossed

2018 Regular Session

White

Abstract: Creates a commission to study the feasibility of consolidating the Washington Parish and Bogalusa school systems.

Present constitution (Art. 8, Sec. 10(C)) provides that two or more school systems may be consolidated as provided by law. Present law (R.S. 17:1379) provides that an election shall

be called for the purpose of consolidating two or more school systems in accordance with present constitution, pursuant to an Act of the legislature or a resolution adopted by each of the affected school boards. Further provides that any such consolidation is subject to approval by a majority of the electors voting, in each affected school system, in the election held for this purpose.

Proposed law creates the Bogalusa/Washington Parish School System Consolidation Commission to study the feasibility of consolidating the Bogalusa City School System and the Washington Parish School System. Further provides that the commission shall consist of 24 members as follows:

- (1) The president of the Bogalusa City School Board.
- (2) The superintendent of the Bogalusa City School System.
- (3) The president of the Washington Parish School Board.
- (4) The superintendent of the Washington Parish School System.
- (5) The mayor of the City of Bogalusa.
- (6) The mayor of the City of Franklinton.
- (7) The president of Washington Parish or his designee.
- (8) The president of the Bogalusa Chamber of Commerce or his designee, who shall be a member of the chamber.
- (9) The president of the Franklinton Chamber of Commerce or his designee, who shall be a member of the chamber.
- (10) One parent of a child enrolled in a school in the Bogalusa City School System, appointed by the president of the Bogalusa City School Board.
- (11) One parent of a child enrolled in a school in the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the president of the Washington Parish School Board.
- (12) Three parents who have a child enrolled in a public school in either the Bogalusa City School System or the Washington Parish School System, one appointed by the state representative who represents House District No. 75, one appointed by the state representative who represents House District No. 74, and one appointed by the state senator who represents Senate District No. 12.
- (13) One teacher who teaches at a school in the Bogalusa City School System or the Washington Parish School System, appointed by the Louisiana Federation of Teachers.
- (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 member of the clergy who resides within the geographic boundaries of the Bogalusa City School System, appointed by the Help Center of Churches.
- (17) One member of the clergy 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.
- (21) The finance director for the Bogalusa City School Board.
- (22) The finance director for the Washington Parish School Board.

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 each school system 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, but the meeting site shall alternate between Bogalusa and 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, judgment, 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 Aug. 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. 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 Sept. 1, 2019.

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

(Adds R.S. 17:1381)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill:

1. Increase number of commission members from 22 to 24 by adding the finance director for the Bogalusa and Washington Parish school boards.

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Change reference to two commission members from "minister" to "member of the clergy".