
DIGEST

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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".