

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

ACT 126 (SB 170)

2019 Regular Session

Thompson

New law creates the Rural Water Infrastructure Committee within the office of the governor for the purpose of providing advice and guidance to the governor on all matters relative to rural water systems in Louisiana.

Provides for the membership of the committee, comprised of 17 members, as follows:

- (1) The State Director of United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development in Louisiana or his designee.
- (2) The State Director of the United States Economic Development Administration or his designee.
- (3) The governor or his designee.
- (4) The governor's designee to the Delta Regional Authority.
- (5) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health or his designee.
- (6) The secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality or his designee.
- (7) The executive director of the Louisiana Office of Community Development or his designee.
- (8) The director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness or his designee.
- (9) The executive director of the Louisiana Rural Water Association or his designee.
- (10) The executive director of the Police Jury Association of Louisiana or his designee.
- (11) The executive director of the Louisiana Municipal Association or his designee.
- (12) The president of the Louisiana Association of Planning and Development Districts or his designee.
- (13) The president of the Senate or his designee.
- (14) The speaker of the House of Representatives or his designee.
- (15) The chairman of the Louisiana Rural Caucus or a member of the Louisiana Rural Caucus designated by the chairman.
- (16) The commissioner of agriculture or his designee.
- (17) The executive secretary of the Louisiana Public Service Commission or his designee.

Provides that members will serve terms concurrent with the governor. Provides that the governor's designee to the Delta Regional Authority will serve as chairman and develop procedures for the operation of the committee.

Provides that committee members will serve without compensation and authorizes legislative members of the committee to receive the same per diem and travel allowance for attending meetings of the committee as is normally provided for meetings of legislative committees.

Authorizes the governor or the chairman of the committee to request employees of federal, state, or local agencies involved with rural water systems to participate as nonvoting members of the committee.

Authorizes the committee to request administrative and technical support from the governor's office.

Requires the names of the members who will serve on the committee to be submitted to the governor not later than August 15, 2019.

Requires the committee to perform the following functions and duties:

- (1) To advise the governor on all matters relative to rural water systems in Louisiana.
- (2) To advise and provide technical assistance to rural water systems, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to improve infrastructure and ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.
- (3) To work collaboratively to assess and prioritize rural water system deficiencies.
- (4) To offer emergency response assessments for rural water systems during public health emergencies upon request.
- (5) To foster cooperation among federal, state, and local governmental agencies on all issues pertaining to rural water systems.
- (6) To conduct such studies as are necessary to develop and implement a comprehensive rural water infrastructure plan.
- (7) To create a clearinghouse of educational materials to assist rural water systems, local governments, and nonprofit organizations.
- (8) To review programs, conditions, trends, and engineering findings which affect rural water systems in order to make recommendations for improvements.
- (9) To assist in the identification of potential sources of funding for rural water systems and to develop advice with respect to which expenditures are in the best interest of the state.

Further requires the committee to advise and make recommendations to the governor on the following:

- (1) Establishing funding criteria for rural water systems.
- (2) Establishing a process to hold noncompliant water systems accountable including legislative audits and mandatory management training.
- (3) Increasing inspection and enforcement of rural water systems by state agencies.
- (4) Establishing a system for the review of engineering proposals for infrastructure upgrades to rural water systems.
- (5) Developing financial incentives for rural water systems to consolidate when deemed appropriate.
- (6) Developing recommendations for legislative action relative to rural water systems.

Requires the committee to submit a written report to the governor by March first of each year relative to the progress, challenges, and recommendations concerning policy and possible legislation relative to rural water systems.

Effective upon signature of the governor (June 6, 2019).

(Adds R.S. 36:4(BB) and R.S. 49:220.31-220.33)