
DIGEST

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HB 573 Engrossed

2021 Regular Session

Stefanski

Abstract: Provides for the administration, review, and adjudication of ad valorem tax assessments by the Board of Tax Appeals, the La. Tax Commission, and assessors.

Present law provides for the establishment of the Board of Tax Appeals (board) to hear and decide disputes between taxpayers and any state or local tax collector. Present law provides for the membership, qualifications, and appointments to the board.

Proposed law retains present law as it relates to the board but expands the qualifications of a nominee for a board position to include a person who has La. tax law experience rather than a person with La. *sales* tax law experience.

Proposed law increases the membership of the Local Tax Division Nominating Committee from eight to ten members by adding a member who represents the La. Assessor's Association and a representative selected jointly by the Council of State Taxation, the Pelican Institute, and the La. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Further expands the qualifications for members of the nominating committee to include a certified La. assessor.

Present law provides for the jurisdiction of the board which includes petitions for declaratory judgment or actions related to the constitutionality of a law or ordinance or the validity of a regulation concerning a state or local tax or fee.

Proposed law retains present law but adds that the board's jurisdiction over petitions for declaratory judgement or other actions extends to matters related to state or local taxes or fees and contracts related to fees.

Present law defines a "local collector" as an individual or entity responsible for collecting occupational license or occupancy taxes, or local taxes or fees except those tax matters within the jurisdiction of the La. Tax Commission (commission).

Proposed law adds ad valorem taxes to the taxes a local collector may collect and removes the exclusion for tax matters within the jurisdiction of the commission. Proposed law further defines a local collector to include an assessor or the commission if they are a party to a proceeding related to appeals for the redetermination of an assessment or the determination of an overpayment.

Present law authorizes a taxpayer to appeal to the board for a redetermination of an assessment or a determination of an overpayment when a taxpayer is aggrieved by an assessment made by a state

collector or by a state collector's action or failure to act on a claim for refund or credit of an overpayment. Present law establishes a procedure for a taxpayer to file a petition for payment of taxes under protest.

Proposed law retains present law but specifies that a taxpayer must comply with the present law procedure related to suits for payment of taxes under protest.

Proposed law sets forth a procedure for a relevant party who is aggrieved by an action of a local collector, assessor, or the commission, if the action is appealable to the board. Further authorizes an intervention by the relevant assessor and requires joinder of the relevant assessor under certain circumstances. Proposed law excludes actions concerning local tax sales, the nullification of tax sales, or the contesting of the seizure of movables for collection from this procedure.

Present law provides for the determination of the appellate court that has jurisdiction over decisions or judgments of the board including the court of appeal for the parish where the tax is being litigated, the court the parties stipulate to have jurisdiction, or the court of appeal for the parish of the appellee for a case appealed by a collector.

Proposed law retains present law but provides that if none of the options for review in present law are applicable, the judgment may be reviewed by the court of appeal designated by the board that has the most connection to the matter or, if none, the court of appeal for East Baton Rouge Parish.

Present law requires the commission to assess public service properties for purposes of ad valorem taxes. Further requires the commission to give notice of the initial determination of the assessed valuation in writing to a company and the initial determination shall become final if no protest is filed with the commission within 30 days after receipt by the company of the notice of the initial determination. Present law provides for a procedure for a company to protest an initial valuation and a procedure for the company to appeal decisions of the commission.

Proposed law retains present law but authorizes parties to appeal to the board in suits contesting the valuation or assessment of public service properties when the suit affects assessments of property in more than one parish. Further clarifies that references to "reviewing court" in proposed law includes the board.

Present law authorizes the commission to correct or change the assessment of any company in order to make the assessment conform to facts. A company may institute a suit to contest the correctness or legality of any corrections and changes of its assessed valuation by the commission.

Proposed law retains present law related to the authorization for a company to contest the correctness of an assessment but specifies that these suits shall be subject to provisions of present law related to appeals of the final determination of the assessed value of property by the commission.

Present law requires an assessor to annually assess and value property within their jurisdiction for purposes of ad valorem property taxes. Further provides for the assessment procedure and time line an assessor is required to follow in order to notify a property owner of the assessed value of his

property. Present law also sets forth a procedure for a property owner to contest a property's valuation including the establishment of boards of review which consists of the governing authorities in each parish.

Present law requires the commission to conduct public hearings within 10 days of receipt of the assessment lists to hear real and personal property appeals of taxpayers, tax-recipient bodies, or assessors from actions of the board of review.

Proposed law retains present law but requires a review of the correctness of an assessment by an assessor to be confined to review of evidence presented to the assessor prior to the close of the deadline for filing a complaint with the board of review. If a taxpayer makes application to present additional evidence before the date set for hearing on the appeal and the commission finds that the additional evidence is material and there were reasons for failure to timely present the evidence to the assessor, the commission may order the assessor to take the additional evidence. Proposed law authorizes an assessor to modify the assessment because of the additional evidence and to notify the commission of modifications within 15 calendar days of receipt of the additional evidence.

Proposed law provides that good reason for failure to timely present information to the assessor shall be presumed to exist for reports and related attachments of any appraiser or other expert ordered prior to the deadline for filing a complaint with the board of review if the report and attachments are submitted to the assessor within 30 days of receipt of the reports and attachments by the taxpayer and at least 25 days prior to a hearing before the commission.

Proposed law authorizes witnesses to be used to authenticate or explain documents which are otherwise admissible and provides for the use of publicly accessible data, guides, and resources.

Proposed law provides that a decision of the commission to deny a taxpayer's application to present additional evidence shall, at the option of the taxpayer, be considered a final determination for purposes of appeal or be subject to immediate review by application for supervisory writ to the appeal court.

Proposed law in appeals of the correctness of assessments, authorizes the commission to independently appraise property and to enter that appraisal into evidence for consideration on review of the correctness of the assessment.

Proposed law sets forth the actions the commission or a district court may take when reviewing the correctness of an assessment by an assessor and provides for specific reasons that may warrant the commission or the district court to reverse or modify the assessor's assessment.

Proposed law provides that if an assessor receives additional information from a taxpayer after the assessment lists have been certified to the board of review but before the filing of a complaint with the board of review, the assessor may modify the assessment to make a reduction based on the additional evidence. Reductions in assessments shall be communicated to the taxpayer and the board of review no less than 24 hours prior to the board of review's public hearing.

Present law authorizes a taxpayer who is dissatisfied with the final determination of the commission concerning the correctness of an assessment to file a suit within 30 days of the entry of a final decision of the commission in the district court for the parish where the commission is domiciled or the district court of the parish where the property is located.

Present law establishes a procedure for claims against a political subdivision for ad valorem taxes erroneously paid to the political subdivision which includes presenting the claim to the commission within three years of the date of the payment. Present law further provides a procedure for a taxpayer who prevails in their claim for ad valorem taxes erroneously paid to present a claim to the commission to receive a refund of the payments. Present law authorizes an appeal to the district court if an assessor or the commission refuses to approve a claim for a refund.

Proposed law retains present law but authorizes a taxpayer to also appeal to the board.

Present law establishes a procedure for a taxpayer to challenge the correctness of an assessment or a legality challenge by timely paying the disputed amount under protest to the tax collector. Present law provides for the proper party defendants who must be included in these suits.

Proposed law retains present law but provides for the proper party defendants who must be included in a correctness challenge related to appeals of actions by a board of review related to the inspection of assessment lists and notification and review of assessments and appeals of final determinations by the commission. Further provides that a legality challenge may be brought by a petition for recovery of a tax paid under protest before the board which shall provide a legal remedy and right of action for a full and complete adjudication of all questions arising in connection with the tax.

Present law authorizes a taxpayer, in cases of an additional assessment, to pay the additional assessment under protest without having to file an additional suit if the taxpayer shows that the principle of law involved in an additional assessment is already pending before the court for judicial determination and if the taxpayer agrees to abide by the pending court's decision.

Proposed law retains present law but specifies that the assessment under protest may also be under consideration by the board.

Present law requires forms filed by a taxpayer to be considered confidential and limits use solely for purposes of administering the provisions of present law and for verifying eligibility for tax credits. Present law exempts these forms from the provisions of present law concerning present law (Public Records Law); however, the forms shall be admissible in evidence and subject to discovery in judicial or administrative proceedings.

Proposed law retains present law but extends the public records law exemption to all information provided to an assessor and clarifies that the admissibility of the forms into evidence shall be subject to present law protections related to use of confidential information provided by court order.

Effective Jan. 1, 2022.

(Amends R.S. 47:1402(D)(2), (3)(intro. para.), and (5), 1403(B)(6)(c), 1407(3) and (7), 1418(4)(b) and (c), 1431(B), 1436(B), 1437(A), 1856(D)(2) and (3) and (G), 1857(B)(1), 1989(C), 1998(A)(1)(a) and (b)(i) and (D), 2132(D), 2134(B)(3), (D), and (E)(1), and 2327; Adds R.S. 47:1402(D)(3)(h) and (i), 1418(4)(d), 1431(F), 1856(H), 1857(B)(3), 1992(B)(3) and 1998(H) and (I))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Ways and Means to the original bill:

1. Expand jurisdiction of the board to include contracts related to fees and remove exclusions from the board's jurisdiction matters related solely to the correctness of an assessment by a parish assessor that is subject to review by the commission.
2. Change the deadline for submission of evidence for review of the correctness of an assessment by an assessor from the period for inspection of the assessment lists to the deadline for filing a complaint with the board of review.
3. Add provisions related to a presumption that good reason for failure to timely present information to an assessor exists for reports and related attachments if the report and attachments are submitted to the assessor within 30 days of receipt of the reports and attachments by the taxpayer and at least 25 days prior to a hearing before the commission.
4. Add authorization for witnesses to be used to authenticate or explain documents and provide for the use of publicly accessible data, guides, and resources.
5. Add provisions that a decision of the commission to deny a taxpayer's application to present additional evidence shall, at the option of the taxpayer, be considered a final determination for purposes of appeal or be subject to immediate review by application for supervisory writ to the court of appeal.
6. Provide for a public records exception for forms and information provided to an assessor related to the correctness of an assessment.
7. Add an effective date of Jan. 1, 2022.