

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

June 17, 2022

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Clay J. Schexnayder
Speaker of the House
Louisiana House of Representatives
Post Office Box 94062
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9062

RECEIVED
JUN 17 2022
PM 6:07 PM

RE: Veto of House Bill 421 of the 2022 Regular Session

House of Representatives
Clerk's Office

Dear Speaker Schexnayder:

Please be advised that I vetoed House Bill 421 of the 2022 Regular Session.

The bill seeks to implement educational requirements and English language "proficiency" standards for anyone appointed as a levee commissioner or levee and drainage commissioner. The bill requires any appointed levee commissioner or levee and drainage commissioner to have a high school diploma or equivalent and that any appointee must be "proficient in reading and writing in English".

The bill is problematic for several reasons. First, "proficient" is not defined and that ambiguity could lead to unequal application of the law. Second, the bill only provides for English proficiency. The state of Louisiana has no official language and given the long and often complicated history with the French language in our state, I am especially sensitive to excluding individuals from state service simply because they may be more proficient in French than English. In fact, Article XII Section 4 of the Louisiana Constitution provides that "the right of the people to preserve, foster, and promote their respective historic linguistic and cultural origins is recognized."

Finally, the requirements for a high school diploma or equivalent could possibly exclude otherwise well qualified individuals from serving in these important positions. I believe the Senate confirmation process already provides for adequate checks and balances when considering the qualifications of nominated individuals. For these reasons, I have vetoed the bill.

Sincerely,
Handwritten signature of John Bel Edwards in black ink.
John Bel Edwards
Governor

enclosure

cc: Honorable Patrick Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President