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## DIGEST

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Leger

HB No. 516

**Abstract:** Expands the authority of the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, including authorization of a Phase V expansion project.

Present law (uncodified) creates the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority ("authority"). The purpose of the authority is to acquire, construct, reconstruct, extend, improve, maintain, and operate projects within the city of New Orleans in order to promote the economic growth and development of the city and its neighboring parishes. Proposed law retains present law.

Present law defines "project" as any convention, exhibition, or tourist facility, other than lodging facilities, and the necessary furnishings, machinery, equipment, and items incidental thereto. Proposed law specifically removes the limitation relative to lodging facilities and allows for site improvements and infrastructure relative to the authorized projects.

Present law authorizes the authority to enter into contracts to acquire, construct, reconstruct, extend, improve, maintain, or operate projects relative to restaurants, retail outlets, offices, parking, entertainment, and similar activities. Proposed law further authorizes the authority to enter into such contracts relative to hotels.

Present law exempts the authority from state law on the letting of public contracts for the making of any public works or for the purchase of any materials or supplies as it relates to any lease or sublease for allied services such as restaurants, retail outlets, offices, and entertainment. Proposed law further extends such exemption to hotel services.

Present law authorizes the authority to incur debt and issue bonds. Proposed law retains this authorization. However, present law specifically precludes the authority from utilizing nontraditional tax-free bonds from any source when such use would benefit any properties being developed by a private person, firm, or corporation; proposed law eliminates this prohibition.

Present law authorizes "expansion projects" including Phase III and IV. Proposed law authorizes Phase V which will allow a joint venture between the authority and a private entity for a tourism development plan to enhance the Convention Center and install basic infrastructure to facilitate private development on property owned by the Exhibition Hall Authority, the public component of which is divided into the following four stages:

- (1) Public infrastructure improvements on Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras St. to

Orange St., including utility improvements, redevelopment of traffic lanes, and a linear park and pedestrian mall; public infrastructure improvements by Henderson St., Tchoupitoulas St., Orange St., and the Mississippi River flood wall to extend Convention Center Blvd. from Henderson St. to Orange St., including a traffic circle, public utility infrastructure to support anticipated private development, and soil remediation; and the relocation of existing power lines along Convention Center Blvd. and the incorporation of a "people mover" system along Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras St. to Orange St.

- (2) Development of a riverfront festival park along the Mississippi River at existing wharfs, providing access to the river through the development of approximately five acres for recreational, hospitality, commercial, and residential use; and development of Riverfront Festival Park infrastructure, including public utilities, lighting, and landscaping.
- (3) Integration of the Convention Center with its surrounding urban areas through the renovation of the south end of the existing Convention Center by creating a new south entrance; incorporation of a new kitchen and restaurant facility at the south end of the Convention Center; development of an executive conference center to be integrated as part of a new, privately developed hotel; and relocation of existing Convention Center functions currently at the south end of the facility to accommodate a new entrance and connection to the combined executive conference center and hotel.
- (4) Demolition of the New Orleans World Trade Center buildings and site preparation to facilitate the creation and development of a riverfront festival park.

Proposed law provides that without reference to any other provision of the Constitution or of laws of Louisiana, the authority is authorized from time to time, with the approval of the State Bond Commission, to issue its negotiable bonds in one or more series for the purpose of providing funds to finance Phase V, in accordance with present law; said bonds to be payable from all revenues derived by the authority as more particularly set forth in the resolution providing for their issuance.

Proposed law further provides that the Act does not nor is it intended to impair outstanding bonded debt obligations of the authority, and to any extent that any provision of the Act is inconsistent with other laws, the Act prevails.

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

(Amends Sections 4(intro. para.), 4D, 4G, 4M, 20A, and 23 of Act No. 305 of the 1978 R.S., as amended; Adds Section 20F of Act No. 305 of the 1978 R.S., as amended)