

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE BILL NO. 621

BY REPRESENTATIVE ABRAMSON

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

CONSTITUTION/CONVENTION: Provides for calling a limited constitutional convention for fiscal purposes and preparations therefor

1 AN ACT

2 To provide for the calling of a constitutional convention for the purpose of framing a new  
3 constitution; to place restrictions on the convention and to limit the convention to the  
4 consideration and submission of matters related to certain specified fiscal and related  
5 subjects; to provide for legislative findings; to fix the time and place for the  
6 convention; to provide for the qualifications and election or appointment of  
7 delegates; to create a constitutional convention Evaluation and Drafting Committee  
8 and provide for preparations and planning for the convention, including a draft of a  
9 proposed constitution; to provide for the organization and staff of the convention; to  
10 require that the constitution as adopted by the convention, including any alternative  
11 provisions, be submitted to the qualified electors for adoption and to provide relative  
12 to such submission; to provide for penalties for violations relating to elections; to  
13 require appropriation of funds for the convention and provide with respect to  
14 convention funds; to fix the effective date of the new constitution if approved by the  
15 electorate; and to provide for related matters.

16 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

17 Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature finds that:

18 (A) It has been almost thirty-nine years since the Constitution of Louisiana became  
19 effective at twelve midnight on December 31, 1974, and during these years the document

1 which constitutes the state's basic law has been amended some one hundred seventy-five  
2 times.

3 (B) The need to address a number of key policy areas that require constitutional  
4 change has become apparent, including such matters as the state's tax structure and  
5 budgetary practices which hamper the state's economic growth and competitiveness as well  
6 as the quality of life of Louisiana residents; the dedication of state revenues and the resulting  
7 inability of the legislature to allocate resources where needed, particularly for the needs of  
8 health care and higher education; the fiscal restraints on local governments that dramatically  
9 limit their authority to meet fiscal and budgetary demands; and other matters.

10 (C) The constitution today contains many provisions that restrict the legislature in  
11 effectively addressing state and constituent needs, and the document also includes extensive  
12 provisions that are so detailed as to be statutory rather than constitutional in nature and  
13 which, as a result, require further constitutional amendment when any change is needed.

14 (D) A serious analysis and revision of the state constitution is needed if the state is  
15 to conduct a genuine examination of the state's critical needs, to undertake an in-depth  
16 consideration of reform proposals, and to craft provisions that allow for flexibility and  
17 innovation in legislative solutions to problems of the present and the future.

18 Section 2. Evaluation and Drafting Committee. (A) The Evaluation and Drafting  
19 Committee is hereby created. The purpose of the committee shall be to evaluate and  
20 determine if a constitutional convention is needed to address the needs of the state and its  
21 people and, if it determines that a convention is needed, to develop and propose a plan for  
22 the conduct of an effective constitutional convention, including, subject to the limitations  
23 provided by Section 6 of this Act, a draft of a proposed constitution with alternative  
24 proposals for provisions on significant policy areas.

25 (B)(1) The Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be composed of thirteen  
26 members as follows:

27 (a) Two members of the Louisiana House of Representatives appointed by the  
28 speaker of the House of Representatives.

29 (b) Two members of the Louisiana Senate appointed by the president of the Senate.

1 (c) Two members appointed by the governor.

2 (d) One member appointed by the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

3 (e) A representative of the Louisiana State Law Institute appointed by the Louisiana  
4 State Law Institute.

5 (f) A representative of the Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center  
6 or the Louisiana State University E. J. Ourso College of Business appointed by the joint  
7 concurrence of the chancellor of the law center and the dean of the business college.

8 (g) A representative of the Southern University Law Center or the Southern  
9 University College of Business appointed by the joint concurrence of the chancellor of the  
10 law center and the dean of the business college.

11 (h) A representative of the Tulane University Law School or the Tulane University  
12 A.B. Freeman School of Business appointed by the joint concurrence of the dean of the law  
13 school and the dean of the business school.

14 (i) A representative of the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law or the  
15 Loyola University New Orleans Joseph A. Butt, S.J. College of Business appointed by the  
16 joint concurrence of the dean of the college of law and the dean of the business college.

17 (j) A representative of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana appointed  
18 by the council.

19 (2) The appointments required by this Subsection shall be made and shall be  
20 submitted to the secretary of state not later than Thursday, August 1, 2013. Not later than  
21 August 8, 2013, the secretary of state shall provide each member appointed with a list of the  
22 membership appointed to the committee. The secretary of state shall issue a commission to  
23 each person appointed as provided in this Section.

24 (3) The committee shall hold its organizational meeting not later than Tuesday,  
25 September 3, 2013, on the call of the speaker of the House of Representatives and the  
26 president of the Senate acting jointly. The committee shall elect a chairman, a vice  
27 chairman, and such other officers as it shall find necessary.

28 (4) Any vacancy in the membership of the committee shall be filled in the manner  
29 of the original appointment.

1 (C) The committee shall have the following powers and duties:

2 (1) The committee shall undertake such studies as shall be necessary to evaluate if  
3 a constitutional convention is needed to address the needs of the state and its people and,  
4 based upon such study, shall make a determination as to whether or not a constitutional  
5 convention is needed.

6 (2) If the committee determines that a constitutional convention is needed, it shall  
7 prepare a plan for the conduct of an effective constitutional convention. Such plan shall  
8 include but not be limited to:

9 (a) A policy agenda for the convention which shall include:

10 (i) Subject to the limitations provided in Section 6 of this Act, identification of  
11 significant policy areas that must be addressed in order to propose a constitution that will  
12 serve the state effectively.

13 (ii) Subject to the limitations provided in Section 6 of this Act, a draft of a proposed  
14 constitution for the state, including provisions addressing significant policy areas identified,  
15 as well as all other provisions necessary for an effective constitution.

16 (iii) Materials explaining the proposed provisions on significant policy areas and the  
17 reasons therefor.

18 (iv) Alternative proposals for provisions on significant policy areas, together with  
19 explanations and explanatory materials therefor. The committee shall include multiple  
20 optional approaches and solutions as appropriate to facilitate the work of the convention in  
21 addressing issues.

22 (v) Pertinent background material and data relative to significant policy areas.

23 (b) Background and other materials that the committee determines will be useful to  
24 the work of the convention.

25 (c) Proposals for elimination of statutory materials from the constitution, together  
26 with recommendations for legislative action relative thereto.

27 (d) Recommendations for convention organization and deliberations, including  
28 significant provisions for rules of procedure.

29 (e) Recommendations for budget needs for effective conduct of a convention.

1 (f) Recommendations for procedures for submission of alternative proposals to the  
2 voters and ballot structure.

3 (3) The committee shall undertake all necessary study and analysis necessary to  
4 complete such plan and submit such plan to the legislature as required by this Section.

5 (D) The committee may create or appoint advisory committees or task forces to act  
6 in an advisory capacity or to assist in its studies, composed of such representatives of the  
7 public or private sectors as it deems appropriate.

8 (E)(1) As soon as possible after the members of the Evaluation and Drafting  
9 Committee have been appointed, the committee shall assemble such staff as it shall deem  
10 necessary to assist it in completing its duties on a timely basis. Such staff may include:

11 (a) Such professional, research, and other employees as the committee shall deem  
12 necessary to carry out its duties. The Evaluation and Drafting Committee may employ such  
13 staff personnel and establish their compensation which shall be paid as provided in  
14 Paragraph (G)(3) of this Section.

15 (b) Personnel provided by the Louisiana State University, Southern University,  
16 Tulane University, and Loyola University law schools from the faculty as requested by the  
17 committee.

18 (2) In addition, to assist the committee in its work, the committee may utilize the  
19 personnel, facilities, and services of the legislative auditor, the legislative fiscal officer, and  
20 the staffs of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the committee may request  
21 and utilize such counsel, assistance, personnel, facilities, and advice as may be obtained  
22 from any and all public sources and from any and all private sources, including but not  
23 necessarily restricted to universities, colleges, foundations, charitable corporations, private  
24 research agencies, individuals, and organizations.

25 (3) The committee may call upon the members or staffs of any and all departments  
26 or agencies of the state for data and assistance, and all such departments and agencies shall  
27 cooperate with the committee.

28 (F) The committee shall submit to the legislature its evaluation and determination  
29 of whether or not a constitutional convention is needed, and if it determines that a

1 convention is needed, it shall also submit to the legislature, accompanying such evaluation,  
2 a plan for the conduct of an effective constitutional convention as provided in Paragraph  
3 (C)(2) of this Section. The committee shall complete its work and make the submission to  
4 the legislature required by this Section no later than March 3, 2014. The committee shall  
5 submit a copy of such report to the governor. If and when the constitutional convention  
6 convenes as provided in Section 3 of this Act, the committee shall submit a copy of the plan  
7 to the convention.

8 (G)(1) The committee may accept grants, donations, gifts, monies, aid, facilities,  
9 and services from public or private sources for the purpose of completing its work and  
10 preparing and submitting the plan for the conduct of the constitutional convention as  
11 required by this Section. Any such grants, monies, facilities, services, and donations, as well  
12 as the names of the donors thereof, shall be recorded in the records of the proceedings of the  
13 committee and of the convention, and such records shall be open to inspection by any  
14 person.

15 (2) The members of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be paid the same  
16 per diem for each day of conducting the work of the committee and for each day of  
17 attendance at meetings of the committee as is provided in Section 9 of this Act for  
18 convention delegates, and the members of the committee shall be subject to the limitations  
19 on other compensation as provided in that Section for convention delegates.

20 (3) Per diem of committee members and all other expenses directly incurred by the  
21 committee may be paid from any funds available for the purpose and, with the approval of  
22 the presiding officers of the two houses of the Louisiana Legislature, from funds available  
23 to such presiding officers for expenses of the legislature.

24 (H) Legislative committee rooms in the state capitol shall be available for use by the  
25 committee, unless required for legislative committee meetings. In addition, the committee  
26 may use the facilities and services of any board, commission, department, or agency of the  
27 state or of any political subdivision of the state, and all such entities shall cooperate with the  
28 committee to the fullest extent in furnishing services and facilities upon request. In addition,  
29 the committee may use the facilities and services of other persons and organizations.

1 (I) If the Evaluation and Drafting Committee determines that a constitutional  
2 convention is needed, the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be dissolved thirty days  
3 after submission of a copy of the plan for the conduct of the constitutional convention to the  
4 convention, except that if a different termination date is provided in the rules of the  
5 convention, the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be dissolved on that date.  
6 However, if the Evaluation and Drafting Committee determines that a convention is not  
7 necessary, the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be dissolved upon adjournment sine  
8 die of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

9 Section 3. Call for convention; delegates. (A) A constitutional convention is hereby  
10 called, to convene on January 5, 2015, at 12:00 noon, which shall be held for the purpose of  
11 framing a new constitution for the state of Louisiana subject to the terms, conditions, and  
12 provisions set forth in this Act.

13 (B)(1) There shall be one hundred twenty-three delegates to the convention, as  
14 follows:

15 (a) One delegate shall be elected from each of the districts from which members of  
16 the House of Representatives of the Louisiana Legislature were elected in 2011.

17 (b) The members of the constitutional convention Evaluation and Drafting  
18 Committee, appointed as provided in Section 2 of this Act, shall be delegates to the  
19 convention.

20 (c) Five additional delegates shall be appointed not later than December 15, 2014,  
21 as follows:

22 (i) A representative of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry appointed  
23 by the association.

24 (ii) A representative of the Louisiana AFL-CIO appointed by the Louisiana AFL-  
25 CIO.

26 (iii) A representative of the Louisiana League of Women Voters appointed by the  
27 league.

28 (iv) A representative of the Louisiana National Association for the Advancement of  
29 Colored People appointed by the association.

1 (v) A representative of the Louisiana Municipal Association or the Police Jury  
2 Association of Louisiana appointed by the joint concurrence of the two associations.

3 (2) The appointments required by this Subsection shall be made and shall be  
4 submitted to the secretary of state not later than December 15, 2014.

5 (3) The secretary of state shall issue a commission to each delegate selected as  
6 provided in this Section.

7 (4) Each delegate to the convention shall be an elector of the state of Louisiana, shall  
8 be at least eighteen years of age, and shall be a resident of the state of Louisiana. In  
9 addition, each delegate elected from a representative district shall be a resident of the district  
10 from which he is elected at the time he qualifies as a candidate for election as a delegate.

11 (5) The election or appointment of any public official or public employee as a  
12 delegate to the convention and his service in the convention or as a member of the  
13 Evaluation and Drafting Committee and his service on the committee and the appointment  
14 of any public official or public employee to the staff of the convention or the staff of the  
15 Evaluation and Drafting Committee and his service on such staff, as authorized and provided  
16 in this Act, shall not be construed to constitute dual officeholding or dual employment within  
17 the prohibitions of Part III of Chapter 2 of Title 42 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of  
18 1950. However, a delegate elected from a representative district shall be considered an  
19 elected official within the scope of and subject to the provisions of Chapter 15 of Title 42  
20 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950. A delegate who is not an elected delegate, a  
21 member of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee, and a member of the staff of the  
22 convention or of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be considered a public  
23 employee within the scope of and subject to the provisions of Chapter 15 of Title 42 of the  
24 Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950. For purposes of Chapter 15 of Title 42 of the Louisiana  
25 Revised Statutes of 1950, the agency and the governmental entity of delegates and staff  
26 members of the convention shall be the convention, and the agency and the governmental  
27 entity of members and staff members of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be  
28 both the committee and the convention. For purposes of any other office or employment of  
29 any such delegate, committee member, or staff member, the provisions of Chapter 15 of

1 Title 42 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950 shall remain applicable. The delegates  
2 to the convention, the staff of the convention, and the members and staff of the Evaluation  
3 and Drafting Committee shall be subject to the public bribery provisions of the laws of this  
4 state.

5 (6) Each candidate for election as a delegate to the constitutional convention and  
6 each elected delegate shall be subject to the provisions of the Campaign Finance Disclosure  
7 Act and the office of delegate shall be a district office for the purposes of that Act.

8 (7) Any attorney at law serving as a delegate to the convention shall be entitled to  
9 the absolute right of the continuance of any case in which he is bona fide counsel of record  
10 in any court of the state during his attendance upon the sessions and work of the convention.

11 (C)(1) The one hundred five delegates to the convention to be elected from  
12 representative districts shall be elected at a special election to be held as provided in this Act.  
13 The special primary election for such delegates shall be held at the primary election on  
14 Tuesday, November 4, 2014, and, if necessary, the special general election for delegates  
15 shall be held at a statewide election to be held on Saturday, December 6, 2014. The  
16 governor shall issue a proclamation and give notice of the election to be held under this  
17 Section not less than forty-five days before the date of the special primary election. Each  
18 person desiring to become a candidate for election as a delegate from a representative district  
19 shall qualify as a candidate from the particular representative district he seeks to represent  
20 by filing a statement of candidacy with the secretary of state not later than the closing of the  
21 qualifying period for candidates in the primary election on November 4, 2014, as otherwise  
22 provided by law. Qualification as a candidate shall be without regard to party affiliation.

23 (2) The election of a person to the office of delegate shall be in accordance with  
24 provisions for the election of candidates for public office in the Louisiana Election Code.

25 Section 4. Conduct of election for elected delegates. (A) Except as otherwise  
26 provided in this Act, the primary and general elections for convention delegates shall be  
27 conducted and the results thereof published and promulgated in accordance with the  
28 Louisiana Election Code. All qualified electors shall be entitled to vote in their respective

1 election precincts without regard to party affiliation. The votes for candidates for the office  
2 of delegate shall be tabulated as in the case of candidates for public office.

3 (B) The costs of the elections authorized by this Act for election of delegates shall  
4 be paid as provided by the Louisiana Election Code for payment of costs of elections in  
5 which a candidate for the state legislature appears on the ballot.

6 (C) All offenses, prosecutions, penalties, and punishments arising out of or in  
7 connection with the elections required by this Act shall be governed by the applicable laws  
8 of the state.

9 Section 5. Vacancies. In the event of the death or the inability or unwillingness of  
10 any elected delegate to serve, whether before or during the convention, the speaker of the  
11 House of Representatives, the president of the Senate, and the governor shall fill such  
12 vacancy by appointment, by unanimous consent of the three officials, of a person from the  
13 same district who possesses the qualifications for delegate. In the event of the death or the  
14 inability or unwillingness to serve of any other delegate, the vacancy shall be filled in the  
15 same manner as the original selection within thirty days after the vacancy.

16 Section 6.(A) The convention shall have authority to frame a new constitution for  
17 the state, including such alternative provisions as it deems appropriate, which shall be  
18 submitted to the electors of the state for their approval or rejection. However, in revising  
19 the constitution, the convention may propose only such changes in the constitution as  
20 specified in this Section.

21 (B) The convention shall have authority to propose substantive changes, including  
22 one or more alternative provisions, only with respect to matters of state and local  
23 government finance and the raising of revenue and the allocation and expenditure of funds  
24 therefor, including review, limitation, or control of the expenditure of funds; specifically,  
25 the convention may propose such substantive changes, including one or more alternative  
26 provisions, with respect to matters contained in the following provisions of the Constitution  
27 of Louisiana of 1974, as amended, and no other:

1 (1) Article VI, entitled "Local Government", but only with respect to Part II entitled  
2 "Finance" and comprised of Sections 26 through 37; and Part III, entitled "Levee Districts  
3 and Regional Flood Protection Authorities" and comprised of Sections 38 through 42.

4 (3) Article VII, entitled "Revenue and Finance".

5 (C)(1) The convention shall not propose substantive changes to any provisions of the  
6 constitution not set forth in Subsection (B) of this Section.

7 (2) The convention shall not propose any changes that will:

8 (a) Change or affect Article I of the constitution, entitled "Declaration of Rights" in  
9 any way.

10 (b) Cause any bonded or other indebtedness of the state or of any parish,  
11 municipality, district, or other political subdivision or authority of the state to be impaired.

12 (c) Cause the term of office of any elected or of any appointed official of the state  
13 or of any political subdivision thereof to be reduced or shortened prior to the expiration of  
14 the term of office being held at the time of the adoption of the new constitution, or cause the  
15 salary of any such official to be reduced prior to the expiration of the term of office being  
16 held at the time of the adoption of a new constitution.

17 (d) Remove or permit the removal of the state capital from Baton Rouge.

18 (D) In addition to the authority to propose substantive changes as provided in  
19 Subsections (B) and (C) of this Section, but solely for the purposes of orderly arrangement,  
20 style and conformity, the convention may incorporate in its proposed revision or in any  
21 alternative provision nonsubstantive changes in other provisions of the constitution but only  
22 to the extent that they are: (1) germane to the matters enumerated in Subsection (B) of this  
23 Section and (2) essential in order to conform to the substantive changes being proposed. For  
24 the same purposes, the convention may: (1) renumber or rearrange provisions, (2) transfer  
25 or divide provisions, (3) change reference designations to conform to redesignated  
26 provisions, and (4) make any other purely formal or clerical changes in keeping with the  
27 purpose of the revision.

28 (E) Any action by the convention in contravention of the provisions of this Section  
29 shall be null and void and of no effect.

1 (F) An action to determine a question of the construction or validity of this Act, to  
2 determine the scope of authority of the convention, or to determine the conformity of any  
3 action of the convention with the provisions of this Act may be brought in the Nineteenth  
4 Judicial District Court. The matter shall be tried by preference over other matters and the  
5 court shall render a decision as soon as practicable. In the event of an appeal, the appellate  
6 court shall place the matter on its preferential docket, shall hear it without delay, and shall  
7 render a decision as soon as practicable.

8 Section 7. Convention organization. (A)(1) The delegates to the convention chosen  
9 as provided in this Act shall meet in the House Chamber in the state capitol, or at such other  
10 suitable location in the capital city as shall be determined jointly by the presiding officers  
11 of the legislature, at 12:00 noon on Monday, January 5, 2015. The chief justice, or in his  
12 absence any associate justice of the supreme court designated by the court, shall attend the  
13 convention at the opening thereof and shall preside until the chairman has been elected. The  
14 secretary of state shall attend the opening of the convention and call the roll of the delegates,  
15 whereupon the temporary presiding officer shall administer to the delegates the following  
16 oath:

17 "I, . . . , do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the constitution and laws of  
18 the United States and the constitution and laws of this state and that I will faithfully and  
19 impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as a delegate to the  
20 convention, according to the best of my ability and understanding, and that I will observe  
21 and obey the limitation of authority contained in the Act under which this convention has  
22 assembled. So help me God."

23 (2) No delegate shall be qualified to serve as such unless and until he has taken and  
24 subscribed to the oath in Paragraph (1) of this Subsection.

25 (B) After the oath has been administered, the delegates shall proceed to effect the  
26 permanent organization of the convention and shall:

27 (1) Adopt rules of procedure for the convention, which rules shall not be inconsistent  
28 with the provisions of this Act.

1           (2) Elect from among their number a chairman, a vice chairman, and such other  
2 officers as they deem necessary.

3           (3) Elect from among their number an executive committee, the membership of  
4 which shall be determined by the delegates but which shall include among its members all  
5 of the elected officers of the convention.

6           (4) Elect a chief clerical officer of the convention who shall not be a delegate and  
7 whose duties shall be provided by the rules of procedure for the convention.

8           (5) Take such other actions as they deem necessary to effect a permanent  
9 organization of the convention.

10          (C) Prior to the convening of the convention, members of the House of  
11 Representatives and Senate staffs as designated by the presiding officers of the legislature  
12 shall prepare a draft of rules of procedure for consideration, amendment, and adoption by  
13 the convention when it convenes. Such proposed rules shall be based upon the rules of the  
14 constitutional convention convened in 1973, except as inconsistent with the provisions of  
15 this Act. The rules of procedure adopted by the convention shall be subject to later change  
16 as the delegates shall provide therein. No delegate shall be allowed to vote by proxy and the  
17 rules shall so provide. No committee of the convention, including the executive committee,  
18 shall exceed seventeen members and the rules shall so provide.

19          (D) After completing organizational activities, the convention may meet either as  
20 a full body or in committees until it completes its duties as provided in this Act.

21          Section 8. Staff; budget; committees. (A) As soon as possible after the members  
22 of the executive committee are elected, the executive committee shall employ a research  
23 director, research assistants, and secretarial and clerical personnel in accordance with the  
24 provisions of Subsection B of this Section and may also employ such other professional,  
25 research, technical, and clerical employees as the committee deems necessary.  
26 Compensation of staff personnel shall be established by the executive committee.

27          (B) The staff of the constitutional convention may include but shall not be limited  
28 to the following who shall not be delegates to the convention:

1 (1) A director of research who shall possess such qualifications as determined by the  
2 committee.

3 (2) Research assistants in such number and possessing such qualifications as  
4 determined by the committee.

5 (3) Personnel provided by the Louisiana State University, Tulane University, Loyola  
6 University, and Southern University law schools from the faculty as requested by the  
7 committee.

8 (4) Such other staff as the executive committee deems necessary.

9 (C) The secretary of state shall advertise for applicants for the staff of the  
10 constitutional convention and shall receive such applications for staff service prior to the  
11 first meeting of the convention. He shall present the applications he has received to the  
12 executive committee on the day the convention convenes. If the executive committee deems  
13 necessary, it may receive additional applications after the convention convenes.

14 (D) As soon as possible after the members of the executive committee are elected,  
15 the executive committee shall prepare a budget of anticipated expenses of the convention,  
16 including staff salaries and other necessary expenditures, based on the amount of the  
17 appropriation for the convention and any other funds available for expenditure.

18 (E) The executive committee may create and establish such substantive and  
19 procedural committees as it deems appropriate. The chairman of the convention shall  
20 appoint the chairman, vice chairman, and the membership of each such committee.

21 (F) Unless the legislature is in session, the House chamber and the legislative  
22 committee rooms in the state capitol shall be available for use by the convention and its  
23 committees. If the facilities at the state capitol are not available or are not sufficient for use  
24 by the convention or its committees, the convention or its committees shall meet at a suitable  
25 location in the capital city, which location shall be determined by the chairman of the  
26 convention, and public notice of the location shall be given and posted at suitable locations  
27 in the state capitol. The convention shall have full authority to use the facilities and services  
28 of any board, commission, department, or agency of the state or of any political subdivision  
29 of the state, and all such entities shall cooperate with the convention to the fullest extent in

1 furnishing services, facilities, and employees upon request. In addition, the convention may  
2 use the facilities and services of other persons and organizations.

3 (G) The convention shall have full authority to accept grants, monies, aid, facilities,  
4 and services from public or private sources for the purpose of accomplishing its task of  
5 framing a new constitution. Any such grants, monies, facilities, services, and donations, as  
6 well as the names of the donors thereof, shall be recorded in the record of the proceedings  
7 of the convention, and such records shall be open to inspection by any person.

8 (H) The final draft of the proposed constitution shall be completed no later than July  
9 15, 2015.

10 Section 9. Compensation of delegates. The delegates to the convention shall receive  
11 a per diem for each day of actual attendance at meetings of the convention or of committees  
12 thereof in the amount provided for members of the legislature for attendance at legislative  
13 sessions, but no delegate shall be paid a per diem after July 15, 2015, or the date the final  
14 draft is completed, whichever is earlier. No delegate may accept any other compensation  
15 from any source for work performed as a delegate to the convention. However, if a delegate  
16 is engaged in regular, bona fide employment, should the delegate's employer choose to  
17 continue to pay the usual compensation while the delegate is engaged in the work of the  
18 convention, such delegate may accept that compensation, notwithstanding any provision of  
19 law to the contrary.

20 Section 10. Appropriation; use of funds. (A) Any appropriation for the expenses  
21 of the convention shall be used solely to defray the necessary expenses of the constitutional  
22 convention for which provision is made in this Act, including the payment of per diem of  
23 delegates, salaries, and expenses of necessary employees, supplies, materials, equipment,  
24 printing, and reproduction of materials, and all other necessary expenses incurred in  
25 connection with the convention and its work.

26 (B) Any funds appropriated for the convention shall be withdrawn from the state  
27 treasury in accordance with warrants signed by the chairman of the convention, and all  
28 checks for the disbursement of funds shall be signed by the chairman and the vice chairman

1 of the convention or by the chairman or vice chairman and such other person as shall be  
2 designated by the convention.

3 (C) The legislature shall make adequate appropriations to the convention for so long  
4 as the convention remains in existence and for so long thereafter as is necessary to assure  
5 the payment of all expenses incurred in connection with the work of the convention. The  
6 convention shall not be deemed to be a budget unit of the state and therefore shall not be  
7 subject to the provisions of Chapter 1 of Title 39 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950.  
8 The financial books and records of the convention, however, shall be subject to audit by the  
9 legislative auditor.

10 Section 11. Submission of proposed constitution; election. (A) Upon completion  
11 of its work and subject to the limitations provided in Section 6 of this Act, the convention  
12 shall submit a proposed draft of a new constitution for the state to the governor. At the  
13 discretion of the convention, but subject to the limitations provided in Section 6 of this Act,  
14 the convention may also propose and submit at the same time such alternative provisions as  
15 it deems appropriate. The constitution as drafted by the convention, together with any  
16 alternative provisions proposed for submission, shall be submitted to the people for adoption  
17 or rejection. Within fifteen days after submission of the proposed draft to the governor, he  
18 shall by proclamation call an election, to be held at the same time as the gubernatorial  
19 primary election in 2015 for the purpose of submitting the proposed draft and any alternative  
20 provisions to the people for adoption or rejection.

21 (B) The election shall be held, and the results shall be promulgated in accordance  
22 with the Louisiana Election Code. All electors duly qualified to vote in the state at the time  
23 of the election shall be entitled to vote without regard to party affiliation in their respective  
24 precincts on the proposition for or against adoption of the revision and on the question or  
25 questions of adoption of such alternative provisions as may be proposed by the convention.  
26 The costs of the election shall be paid as provided in the Louisiana Election Code for  
27 elections in which a constitutional amendment appears on the ballot.

28 (C) The convention may submit to the electors of the state the proposal of  
29 acceptance or rejection of the constitution and any alternative provisions in such form and

1 manner as it may determine and may direct the proper election officials to take the necessary  
2 steps to effectuate such determination of the convention in presenting the proposed  
3 constitution and any alternative provisions to the electors. Adoption of the constitution and  
4 of any such alternative provisions shall require the favorable vote of a majority of the  
5 electors voting on the respective proposition.

6 (D) Upon promulgation of the results of the election by the secretary of state, if the  
7 constitution is ratified and adopted by the people in the election for which provision is made  
8 in this Section, the governor shall proclaim the constitution, including such alternative  
9 provisions as are adopted by the people at the election, to be the Constitution of Louisiana.  
10 The constitution, including such alternative provisions as are so adopted, shall become  
11 effective at midnight on December 31, 2015, except as otherwise provided in the constitution  
12 adopted or in any such alternative provisions adopted.

13 Section 12. If any provision or application of this Act which authorizes the  
14 convention to consider only certain subject matters and certain provisions of the constitution  
15 and prohibits the convention from considering other subject matters and provisions is held  
16 invalid, including without limitation any provision of Section 6 of this Act, then this entire  
17 Act shall be invalid and of no effect. However, if any other provision of this Act or the  
18 application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or  
19 applications of this Act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or  
20 application.

21 Section 13. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
22 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
23 by the governor, as provided in Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
24 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
25 effective on the day following such approval.

## DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

Abramson

HB No. 621

**Abstract:** Calls a limited constitutional convention preceded by study by an Evaluation and Drafting Committee to determine if a convention is needed. If the committee determines a convention is needed, provides that its report include a convention plan, including a proposed constitution. Calls convention to convene on Jan. 5, 2015, to be composed of 123 delegates, 105 elected from representative districts and 18 appointed. Requires convention to complete a new constitution by July 15, 2015. Limits convention to changes relative to state and local finance, raising revenue, and allocation and expenditure of funds.

Proposed law states legislative findings that there is a need to address a number of key policy areas that require constitutional change, that the constitution restricts the legislature in effectively addressing state and constituent needs, and that a serious analysis and revision of the state constitution is needed to conduct an examination of the state's critical needs, to consider reform proposals, and to craft provisions that allow legislative solutions.

## EVALUATION AND DRAFTING COMMITTEE

Proposed law creates the Evaluation and Drafting Committee. Provides that its purpose is to evaluate and determine if a constitutional convention is needed, and if it determines that a convention is needed, to develop and propose a plan for the conduct of an effective constitutional convention, including a draft of a proposed constitution with alternative provisions, subject to subject matter limitations applicable to the convention. (See CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION below)

- (1) Provides that the committee is composed of 13 members, to be appointed by Thursday, August 1, 2013, as follows:
  - (a) Two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the speaker.
  - (b) Two members of the Senate appointed by the Senate president.
  - (c) Two members appointed by the governor.
  - (d) One member appointed by the chief justice of the La. Supreme Court.
  - (e) A representative of the La. State Law Institute appointed by the La. State Law Institute.
  - (f) A representative of the LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center or the LSU E.J. Ourso College of Business appointed jointly by the law center chancellor and the business college dean.
  - (g) A representative of the Southern University Law Center or the Southern University College of Business appointed jointly by the law center chancellor and the business college dean.
  - (h) A representative of the Tulane University Law School or the Tulane University A.B. Freeman School of Business appointed jointly by the law school dean and the business school dean.
  - (i) A representative of the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and the Loyola University New Orleans Joseph A. Butt, S.J., College of Business appointed jointly by the law school dean and the business college dean.
  - (j) A representative of the Public Affairs Research Council of La. appointed by the council.
- (2) Requires the committee to hold its organizational meeting not later than Tuesday, September 3, 2013, and elect a chairman, a vice chairman, and other officers it finds

- necessary. Provides for filling of committee vacancies in the manner of the original appointments.
- (3) Requires the committee to undertake studies necessary to evaluate if a constitutional convention is needed to address the needs of the state and its people and, based upon such study, to determine if a constitutional convention is needed.
  - (4) Provides, if the committee determines that a constitutional convention is needed, that the committee prepare a plan for the conduct of an effective constitutional convention, such plan to include:
    - (a) A policy agenda for the convention which shall include (subject to subject matter limitations on the convention described below): identification of significant policy areas to be addressed; a draft of a proposed constitution, including provisions addressing significant policy areas and other necessary provisions; materials explaining the significant policy issue proposals; alternative proposals on significant policy areas, together with explanations and explanatory materials (to include multiple optional approaches and solutions); pertinent background material and data on significant policy areas.
    - (b) Background and other materials useful to the convention.
    - (c) Proposals for elimination of statutory materials and recommendations for legislative action relative thereto.
    - (d) Recommendations for convention organization and deliberations, including significant rules of procedure.
    - (e) Recommendations for convention budget needs.
    - (f) Recommendations for procedures for submission of alternative proposals to the voters and ballot structure.
  - (5) Authorizes the committee to create or appoint advisory committees or task forces to advise or assist in its studies, composed of representatives of the public or private sectors.
  - (6) Requires the Evaluation and Drafting Committee to assemble necessary staff, to include: committee employees (authorizes employment of professional, research, and other employees with compensation to be established by the committee and paid as provided in the Act) (see 9 below); personnel provided by the LSU, Southern University, Tulane University, and Loyola University law schools from the faculty as requested by the committee. Authorizes the committee to use personnel, facilities, and services of the legislative auditor, the legislative fiscal officer, and the staffs of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and to request and utilize counsel, assistance, personnel, facilities, and advice from public and private sources. Authorizes the committee to call upon the members or staffs of state departments or agencies for data and assistance and requires them to cooperate with the committee.
  - (7) Requires the committee to complete its work and submit to the legislature by March 3, 2014, its evaluation and determination of whether or not a constitutional convention is needed, and if it determines that a convention is needed, to also submit its plan for the conduct of an effective constitutional convention. Requires that a copy of such report be submitted to the governor and to the constitutional convention if and when it convenes.
  - (8) Authorizes the committee to accept grants, donations, gifts, monies, aid, facilities, and services from public or private sources which shall be recorded with the names of the donors thereof in the records of the committee and the convention and shall be open to inspection by any person.

- (9) Provides that Evaluation and Drafting Committee members be paid the same per diem for each day of committee work and each day of committee meeting attendance as is provided for convention delegates and makes committee members subject to the same limitations on other compensation as provided for convention delegates. (See below). Provides that per diem and other expenses of the committee may be paid from any funds available for the purpose and, with the approval of the presiding officers of the two houses of the La. Legislature, from funds available for expenses of the legislature.
- (10) Requires that legislative committee rooms in the state capitol be available for committee use, unless required for legislative committee meetings. Permits the committee to use facilities and services of any state or local department or agency and requires that they cooperate by furnishing services and facilities upon request. Also authorizes the committee to use the facilities and services of other persons and organizations.
- (11) Provides that the Evaluation and Drafting Committee shall be dissolved 30 days after submission of the plan for the conduct of the constitutional convention to the convention unless a different termination date is provided in convention rules. However, provides that if the committee determines that a convention is not necessary, it shall be dissolved upon adjournment sine die of the 2014 R.S.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Proposed law provides for a constitutional convention as follows:

- (1) Calls the convention to convene at noon on Jan. 5, 2015, to frame a new constitution for the state, subject to the terms, conditions, and provisions of the Act.
- (2) Provides for 123 delegates as follows:
- (a) 105 delegates to be elected from House of Representatives 2011 election districts.
  - (b) 13 delegates who shall be the members of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee (see above).
  - (c) Five additional delegates appointed not later than Dec. 15, 2014, as follows:
    - (i) A representative of the La. Association of Business and Industry appointed by the association.
    - (ii) A representative of the La. AFL-CIO appointed by the La. AFL-CIO.
    - (iii) A representative of the La. League of Women Voters appointed by the league.
    - (iv) A representative of the La. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People appointed by the association.
    - (v) A representative of the La. Municipal Association or the Police Jury Association of La. appointed jointly by the associations.
- (3) Requires that delegates be qualified electors of the state and that elected delegates be residents of the district from which elected. Excepts selection and service of members and staff of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee and delegates and staff of the convention from dual employment/dual officeholding laws. Members of the Evaluation and Drafting Committee, delegates, and staff are subject to the code of ethics, public bribery laws, and, in the case of elected delegates and candidates for delegate, the campaign finance laws. Attorney delegates are entitled to continuance of cases in which they are counsel of record while attending sessions and convention work.
- (4) Provides that the election for delegates shall be held at the primary election on Nov. 4, 2014, and if a general election is necessary, on Dec. 6, 2014. Candidates qualify

without regard to party affiliation. Election is to be in accordance with provisions for election of candidates for public office in the La. Election Code.

- (5) Provides for conduct of the elections in accordance with the election code, except for any conflicts with the Act. Voters vote without regard to party affiliation. Provides for application of state law to tabulation of votes in delegates' election. Provides for election costs to be paid as provided by the La. Election Code as in the case of elections for the state legislature.
- (6) Provides for filling of vacancies in elected delegates' offices by joint appointment by the governor, the speaker of the House, and the president of the Senate of a qualified person from the same district. Provides for filling other vacancies in the same manner as the original selection within 30 days of vacancy.

Proposed law grants to the convention the authority to frame a new state constitution, including such alternative provisions as it deems appropriate. However, provides that the convention may propose substantive changes only with respect to matters of state and local government finance and the raising of revenue and the allocation and expenditure of funds therefor, including review, limitation, or control of the expenditure of funds. Specifies that the convention may propose such substantive changes, including alternative provisions, with respect to matters contained in the following provisions of the Constitution of Louisiana of 1974, as amended, and no other:

- (1) Article VI (Local Government) but only Part II (Finance) and Part III (Levee Districts and Regional Flood Protection Authorities).
- (3) Article VII (Revenue and Finance).

Prohibits the convention from proposing substantive changes to any provisions of the constitution not listed above. Further prohibits any changes that will:

- (1) Change or affect Article I (Declaration of Rights) in any way.
- (2) Cause indebtedness of the state or of any parish, municipality, district, or other political subdivision or authority to be impaired.
- (3) Cause the term of office of state or local elected or appointed officials to be reduced prior to the expiration of the term held at the time of the adoption of the new constitution, or cause the salary of any such official to be reduced prior to the expiration of such term.
- (4) Remove or permit the removal of the state capital from Baton Rouge.

Further permits the convention, solely for the purposes of orderly arrangement, style and conformity, to incorporate nonsubstantive changes in other provisions of the constitution but only to the extent that they are: (1) germane to the specified matters and (2) essential in order to conform to the substantive changes being proposed. Also permits the convention, for the same purposes, to: (1) renumber or rearrange provisions, (2) transfer or divide provisions, (3) change reference designations to conform to redesignated provisions, and (4) make any other purely formal or clerical changes in keeping with the purpose of the revision.

Provides that any action by the convention in contravention of the provisions relative to substantive restrictions shall be null and void and of no effect.

Provides the procedure for judicial determination of the scope of the authority of the convention, questions relating to the construction and validity of the Act, or conformity of any action of the convention with the provisions of this Act and also provides for expedited hearings and decisions.

Proposed law provides for convention organization:

- (1) Includes provisions for oath for delegates; adoption of rules; election of chairman, vice chairman, chief clerical officer, and other officers deemed necessary by the convention; and election of an executive committee which shall include all of the elected officers of the convention; and other actions necessary to organize.
- (2) Provides for House and Senate staff designated by the presiding officers of the legislature, prior to the convention, to prepare rules of procedure for adoption by the convention, based on the 1973 convention rules, such rules to be subject to change and adoption by the convention. Prohibits proxy voting. Limits committee membership to 17 members.

Proposed law provides for the initial meeting of the convention on Jan. 5, 2015. Provides that after organizational activities are completed, the convention may meet either as a full body or in committees until it completes its duties.

Proposed law provides for convention staff, budget, committees, meeting site, and other assistance:

- (1) Requires the executive committee to employ a research director, research and clerical staff, and other employees deemed necessary. Specifies certain staff membership. Provides for soliciting staff applications. Provides for executive committee to set staff compensation.
- (2) Provides that staff may include but not be limited to a research director, research assistants, personnel provided by the four law schools from the faculty as requested by the committee, and such other staff as deemed necessary by the executive committee. Requires the secretary of state, prior to the first meeting of the convention, to advertise and receive applications for staff service and present those applications to the executive committee on the day the convention convenes.
- (3) Requires the executive committee to prepare a budget of anticipated expenses of the convention, based on the amount of the appropriation for the convention and any other funds available for expenditure.
- (4) Authorizes the executive committee to establish any substantive or procedural committees it deems necessary. Provides that the chairman of the convention appoint the chairman, vice chairman, and membership of each such committee.
- (5) Requires that the House Chamber and the legislative committee rooms in the state capitol be available for convention use, unless the legislature is in session. Authorizes the convention to meet elsewhere in Baton Rouge as determined by the chairman when state capitol facilities are not available or are insufficient.
- (6) Authorizes convention use of facilities and services of state departments and agencies and of political subdivisions and requires their cooperation in furnishing services, facilities, and employees. Authorizes the convention to accept grants, facilities, and services from public and private sources, with such to be recorded in convention records which shall be open for inspection.

Proposed law provides for compensation of delegates and payment of convention expenses:

- (1) Provides per diem for delegates in the same amount provided for the legislature for each day of actual attendance at meetings of the convention or of committees thereof. Prohibits payment of per diem after July 15, 2015, or the date the final draft is completed, whichever is earlier. Prohibits a delegate from accepting any additional compensation for work performed as a delegate to the convention, but allows a

delegate to continue to receive compensation for the delegate's regular bona fide employment while a delegate.

- (2) Requires that the legislature make adequate appropriations to the convention for the payment of the necessary expenses of the convention such as per diem, salaries, and expenses of employees, supplies, materials, equipment, and printing for so long as the convention remains in existence and for so long thereafter as is necessary to pay the expenses of the convention. Provides that the convention is not a state budget unit. Specifies that the convention is subject to audit by the legislative auditor.
- (3) Requires that funds appropriated be withdrawn from the state treasury in accordance with warrants signed by the convention chairman and that checks be signed by the chairman and vice chairman, or the chairman or vice chairman and such other person as designated by the convention.

**SUBMISSION TO VOTERS/ EFFECTIVENESS**

Proposed law provides that the final draft of a proposed constitution be completed not later than July 15, 2015. Requires the convention, upon completion of its work and subject to the subject matter limitations on the convention, to submit to the governor the proposed constitution and any alternative provisions agreed upon. Provides that the constitution and any alternative provisions proposed for submission shall be submitted to the people for their adoption or rejection at a special election. Provides for the convention to determine the manner for submission of alternative proposals. Requires the governor to call the election within 15 days after the draft is submitted, to be held at the same time as the gubernatorial primary election in 2015 (Oct. 24, 2015). Provides for the election to be held and the results thereof promulgated in accordance with the La. Election Code and for costs to be paid as provided in the election code for elections in which a constitutional amendment appears on the ballot. Voters are allowed to vote without regard to party affiliation. Requires a majority vote to approve the constitution and any alternative proposals.

Proposed law, requires, upon promulgation of the results of the election by the secretary of state if the constitution is ratified and adopted by the people, that the governor proclaim the constitution, including alternative provisions adopted, to be the Constitution of La. Provides that the constitution and any such alternative provisions adopted shall become effective at midnight on Dec. 31, 2015, except as otherwise provided in the constitution or in any alternative provisions adopted.

Proposed law provides that if any provision or application of the Act which authorizes the convention to consider only certain subject matters and certain provisions of the constitution and prohibits the convention from considering other subject matters and provisions is held invalid then this entire Act shall be invalid and of no effect. Specifies, however, that if any other provision of this Act or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

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

**Timetable for Major Provisions of Bill**

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>
Evaluation & Drafting Committee members appointed by	8/1/13
Evaluation & Drafting Committee organizational meeting by	9/3/13
Evaluation & Drafting Committee to complete work by	3/3/14

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>
Dissolution of Evaluation and Drafting Committee	If committee finds convention not needed – adjournment sine die of 2014 R.S. of legislature  Otherwise, 30 days after submission of plan for convention to convention (or other date in convention rules)
Election of 105 convention delegates	11/4/14 & 12/6/14 Congressional election
Five additional convention delegates appointed & submitted to secretary of state not later than	12/15/14
Convention to convene	1/5/15
Convention to complete final draft & deadline for delegates' per diem	7/15/15
Election for submission of proposed constitution	Gubernatorial primary election – 10/24/15
Constitution becomes effective if adopted	12/31/15      Midnight