

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 127

BY REPRESENTATIVE STUART BISHOP

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Supreme Court to allow the public to review personal financial disclosure reports of judges filed with the office of the judicial administrator by making the reports available for viewing on the internet.

WHEREAS, in 2008, the Louisiana Legislature enacted personal financial disclosure requirements for each person holding statewide elected office, the secretary of each state agency, the Public Service Commission Executive Secretary, the State Civil Service Director, the Superintendent of Education, the Commissioner of Higher Education, president of each public postsecondary education system, the Commissioner of Administration, senior staff of the Office of the Governor, members of the Louisiana Legislature, members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Superintendent of the Recovery School District, members of the Ethics Adjudicatory Board, members of the Board of Ethics, the administrator of the Ethics Administration, the executive director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation, members of the Board of Pardons, local elected officials representing a voting district with a population above or below 5,000, members of the State Civil Service Commission, members of the Board of Commissioners of the Louisiana Stadium and Exposition District, each member of the governing authority or management board of a charter school, and each member or designees of members of a board or commission that has the authority to expend, disburse, or invest ten thousand dollars or more of funds in a fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Legislature has statutorily mandated that personal financial disclosure reports filed by these officials be made available on a website by the Board of Ethics "to enhance the public's ability to gather information easily regarding the conduct of elected officials, public employees, and other persons regulated by the board"; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Ethics Administration complies with state law and maintains a website with thousands of personal financial disclosure statements available for public viewing, including a searchable database; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana has been nationally recognized for the adoption of personal financial disclosure laws for legislators, receiving the number one ranking in the country with an "A" grade by the Center for Public Integrity for legislative financial disclosure requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana State Senate passed Senate Resolution No. 6 in the First Extraordinary Session in 2008, urging and requesting the Louisiana Supreme Court to adopt the same financial disclosure standards for judges that are applicable to other elected officials in the Code of Governmental Ethics; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Supreme Court subsequently adopted Rule XXXIX to require all elected judges, except justices of the peace, to annually file a financial statement with the office of the judicial administrator of the Louisiana Supreme Court that is substantially similar to the requirements in statute for legislative personal financial disclosure statements; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Supreme Court maintains a website that includes Rule XXXIX, the blank financial statement form required by Rule XXXIX, and a list of persons who have failed to file, failed to timely file, failed to provide omitted information, or failed to provide accurate information as required by Rule XXXIX; and

WHEREAS, Rule XXXIX specifies that the financial statements required by the Louisiana Supreme Court are a matter of public record and are subject to public inspection and copying; and

WHEREAS, members of the public are unable to view the financial statements of elected judges across Louisiana, without making a formal records request to the Louisiana Supreme Court in New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of financial disclosure of elected officials is to promote public access and oversight, discourage potential conflicts of interest, and enhance public confidence in the integrity of state government, including the judiciary; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Supreme Court maintains the authority to redact any sensitive information necessary for the safety of judges prior to publication; and

WHEREAS, it would greatly benefit the public interest and the integrity of the judiciary for the Louisiana Supreme Court to enhance the public's ability to gather information easily regarding the conduct of the judiciary.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Supreme Court to allow the public to review disclosure reports filed with the office of the judicial administrator by making the reports available for viewing on the internet.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court.

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES