

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 497 Lee County School District, Lee County

SPONSOR(S): Persons-Mulicka and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 96 Y's 21 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 497 passed the House on February 10, 2022, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 10, 2022.

The Florida Constitution provides that each school district must have a superintendent of schools, elected for a four-year term or, if provided by resolution of the school district board or special act approved in a referendum, appointed by the school board. The superintendent serves as the secretary and executive officer of the school district, responsible for general oversight; making recommendations on policy, rules, and minimum standards; and performing other duties assigned by law or rules of the State Board of Education.

The School Board of Lee County adopted a resolution to change the position of the Lee County Superintendent of Schools from an elected position to an appointed one, which was approved by the electorate at the November 5, 1974, general election.

The bill repeals the School Board of Lee County resolution providing for an appointed superintendent and provides for an elected superintendent, subject to approval in a referendum to be conducted at the 2022 General Election. The bill provides that the initial term of the elected superintendent will begin with the 2024 General Election.

The Economic Impact Statement filed with the bill indicates that the bill is revenue neutral and the placement of the question on the ballot is not anticipated to increase the costs that the supervisor of elections will incur in conducting the 2022 General Election.

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 3, 2022, ch. 2022-233, L.O.F., and will become effective upon approval by the qualified electors of Lee County voting in a referendum held in conjunction with the general election on November 8, 2022, except that sections 3 and 4 establishing the referendum became effective on May 3, 2022.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Present Situation

Superintendent of Schools

The Florida Constitution provides that each county constitutes a school district¹ and each school district must have a superintendent of schools.² The superintendent may be elected for a four-year term or, if provided by resolution of the school district board or special act approved in a referendum, selected by the school board.³ The election of a superintendent may only occur at a general election in years that are multiples of four.⁴ The term of the superintendent begins on the second Tuesday following the general election in which the superintendent is elected.⁵

If a resolution or special act providing for the selection of the superintendent by the district school board is approved by the voters, the resolution or special act may not be rescinded or repealed by either method for four years. After that four-year period, the resolution or special act may be rescinded or repealed either by a subsequent resolution of the school board, or subsequent special act, approved by the voters.⁶

Of Florida's 67 school districts,⁷ 26 districts have a board appointed superintendent and 41 have an elected superintendent.⁸

The superintendent serves as the secretary and executive officer of the school district.⁹ The superintendent possesses general powers to:

- Provide general oversight of the school district;
- Advise and counsel the school board on all education matters and make recommendations on the board's course of action;
- Make policy recommendations to the school board;
- Make recommendations on rules to the school board to supplement those adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) and ensure the execution of the rules adopted;
- Make recommendations on minimum standards and ensure adopted standards of the school board and SBE are executed; and
- Perform other duties assigned by law or rules of the SBE.¹⁰

The superintendent is also responsible for:

- Presiding at the organizational meeting for the district school board and submitting required documentation to the Department of Education;
- Attending the school board's regular meetings and calling special meetings in the event of an emergency;
- Maintaining the official records of the school district, including an inventory of district property;
- Preparing a planned school program for the school district that incorporates data, sponsor studies, and surveys;

¹ Art. IX, s. 4, Fla. Const.

² Art. IX, s. 5, Fla. Const.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Art. IX, s. 5, Fla. Const. and s. 100.041(1), F.S.

⁵ S. 100.041(3)(a), F.S.

⁶ Art. IX, s. 5, Fla. Const.

⁷ Each county constitutes a school district. Art. IX, s. 4(a), Fla. Const.

⁸ Florida Association of District School Superintendents, *About Superintendents*, <https://fadss.org/membership/superintendents> (last visited January 23, 2022).

⁹ S. 1001.48, F.S.

¹⁰ S. 1001.49, F.S.

- Recommending the establishment, organization, and operation of schools, classes, and services to provide educational opportunities for all children in the district;
- Managing school district personnel, including recommending the revocation of teaching certificates for good cause;
- Making recommendations concerning textbooks and other instructional aids, including distributing and accounting for such material;
- Providing student transportation;
- The educational facilities of the district;
- Managing the finances of the school district;
- Maintaining records and submitting required reports;
- Cooperating with federal, state, county, or municipal agencies; and
- School improvement and accountability.¹¹

The superintendent must be a resident of the school district.¹² The minimum salary of the superintendent is set by a statutory formula based on county population, but may be set at a higher rate by a majority vote of the school board.¹³

School Board of Lee County

The School Board of Lee County (School Board) consists of seven members each of whom are constitutional officers elected by the citizens of Lee County. Five members are elected by voters in single member districts, with two members elected at large by a countywide vote. Each member elected from a single member district must reside in that district throughout the duration of the term of office.¹⁴

In 1974, the School Board adopted a resolution to change the position of the Lee County Superintendent of Schools (Superintendent) from an elected position to an appointed one, and submitted the resolution to the Board of County Commissioners for placement before the voters at the November 1974 general election.¹⁵ The resolution was approved by the electorate at the November 5, 1974 election.

The School Board is required to evaluate the performance of the Superintendent on terms agreed to in the employment contract. The evaluation rates the Superintendent's performance in each of the Board's essential categories.¹⁶

Effect of the Bill

The bill repeals the School Board of Lee County resolution providing for an appointed superintendent and provides for an elected superintendent, subject to approval by the qualified electors in a referendum to be conducted at the 2022 General Election. If approved by the qualified electors, the initial term of the elected superintendent will begin with the 2024 General Election.

The referendum election must be conducted by the Supervisor of Elections of Lee County in accordance with the Florida Election Code.

¹¹ S. 1001.51, F.S.

¹² S. 1001.463, F.S.

¹³ S. 1001.47, F.S.

¹⁴ The School Board of Lee County Board Policies, section 1.02, available at <https://www.leeschools.net/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=1493176> (last visited January 23, 2022).

¹⁵ School Board of Lee County resolution dated June 12, 1974, on file with the Local Administration & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee. *See also* Lee County Board of County Commissioners Minutes of Meeting August 28, 1974, on file with the Local Administration & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee.

¹⁶ The School Board of Lee County Board Policies, section 1.16, available at <https://www.leeschools.net/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=1493204> (last visited January 23, 2022).

The Economic Impact Statement filed with the bill indicates that the bill is revenue neutral and the placement of the question on the ballot is not anticipated to increase the costs that the supervisor of elections will incur in conducting the 2022 General Election.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT FILED? Yes No

D. NOTICE PUBLISHED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN? Not applicable.

WHERE? Not applicable.

E. REFERENDUM(S) REQUIRED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN? November 8, 2022.