

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 544

BY REPRESENTATIVE OWEN

ELECTIONS/INITIATIVE-REF: Authorizes a citizens advisory referendum election

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 6-F of Title 18 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised  
3 of R.S. 18:1300.41 through 1300.47, relative to a citizens advisory referendum; to  
4 authorize a parish governing authority to call and hold an election relating to a  
5 citizens advisory referendum; to provide for election dates; to provide for a petition  
6 for a citizens advisory referendum election; to provide for the number of required  
7 signatures; to provide for other signature requirements; to provide for the procedure  
8 to file the petition; to provide for the duties of the secretary of state as it relates to the  
9 citizens advisory referendum petition; to provide for the duties of the registrar of  
10 voters as it relates to the citizens advisory referendum petition; to provide for the  
11 duties of the chairman and vice chairman of the citizens advisory referendum  
12 petition; to provide for the form of the citizens advisory referendum on the ballot;  
13 to provide that an election for a citizens advisory referendum shall be conducted in  
14 the same manner provided for in the Louisiana Election Code; to provide for the  
15 results of the election; to provide that the results of the election are for advisory  
16 purposes only; and to provide for related matters.

17 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

18 Section 1. Chapter 6-F of Title 18 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950,  
19 comprised of R.S. 18:1300.41 through 1300.47, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

1                    CHAPTER 6-F. CITIZENS ADVISORY REFERENDUM2                    §1300.41. Citizens Advisory Referendum; Petition

3                    A.(1) A parish governing authority may hold a parish wide referendum for  
4                    advisory purposes if at least ten percent of registered voters within the parish sign  
5                    a petition expressing their desire to have a certain matter on the ballot.

6                    (2) Whenever a citizens advisory referendum is sought by the registered  
7                    voters within a parish, a petition shall be directed to the parish governing authority.  
8                    The petition shall be limited to the request that an election be called and held in the  
9                    parish for the purpose of putting a question on the ballot. No petition for a citizens  
10                   advisory referendum shall seek to put more than one question on the ballot.

11                   (3) The secretary of state shall provide a form approved by the attorney  
12                   general to be used for the petition to call a citizens advisory referendum. Such form  
13                   shall include pre-printed line numbers and shall be in conformity with all other  
14                   provisions of this Chapter and R.S. 18:3. All citizens advisory referendum petitions  
15                   shall be on an approved form or on a form which contains the same information  
16                   required by the approved form, and any petition not on such a form shall be invalid.

17                   B.(1) All signatures on a citizens advisory referendum petition shall be  
18                   handwritten.

19                   (2) The petition shall be signed by at least ten percent of the total number of  
20                   registered voters of the parish wherein the citizens advisory referendum election is  
21                   petitioned.

22                   C.(1) Prior to the entering of any signatures on a petition, the chairman  
23                   designated to represent the petitioners shall file with the secretary of state a copy of  
24                   the citizens advisory referendum petition which will be used and copies of a picture  
25                   identification that contain the name and signature of the chairman and vice chairman,  
26                   respectively, or copies of current utility bills, bank statements, government checks,  
27                   paychecks, or other government documents that show the name and address of the  
28                   chairman and vice chairman, respectively. Upon receipt of the citizens advisory  
29                   referendum petition, the secretary of state shall provide to the chairman and vice

1 chairman, respectively, a document prepared by the secretary of state in conjunction  
2 with the Louisiana Registrars of Voters Association, subject to approval as to content  
3 by the attorney general, providing general information on petition requirements and  
4 deadlines. Upon receipt of the citizens advisory referendum petition, the secretary  
5 of state shall endorse thereon the fact and the date of filing, and this unsigned copy  
6 of the citizens advisory referendum petition shall be a public record. A copy shall  
7 be transmitted by the secretary of state to the registrar of voters for the parish in  
8 which the citizens advisory referendum election is to be held. The chairman shall  
9 list on the petition the parish where the citizens advisory referendum election is to  
10 be held. The petition shall be considered filed when it is received in the office of the  
11 secretary of state. Upon receipt of the citizens advisory referendum petition, the  
12 secretary of state shall produce a report of the number of qualified electors in the  
13 parish wherein the citizens advisory referendum election is sought as of the date of  
14 receipt of the citizens advisory referendum petition and shall notify the registrar of  
15 voters in the parish of the number of qualified electors in the parish for issuance of  
16 the certification.

17 (2)(a) The signed and dated petition shall be submitted to the registrar of  
18 voters for the parish where the citizens advisory referendum election is to be held not  
19 later than one hundred eighty days after the day on which the copy of the petition  
20 was filed with the secretary of state. If the final day for submitting the signed and  
21 dated petition falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the deadline for filing  
22 such petition shall be on the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal  
23 holiday. Upon receipt of the signed and dated petition, the registrar of voters shall  
24 affix the date received and a page number to the front of each page of the petition.

25 (b) With the citizens advisory referendum petition, the chairman shall also  
26 submit to the registrar of voters an affidavit verifying the number of signatures  
27 submitted along with a statement that to the best of his knowledge all documents  
28 submitted are originals and not photocopies.

1           (3)(a) The chairman shall file notice with the registrar on the third day before  
2           the petition is submitted to the registrar that he will submit the petition and the date  
3           of such submission, unless such submission is made within three days prior to the  
4           expiration of the period for submitting such petition. Such notice of submission shall  
5           be a public record. If the notice filed with the registrar on the third day before the  
6           petition is submitted includes a date for submitting the signed and dated petition  
7           which falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or other legal holiday, the registrar shall so  
8           inform the chairman and advise the chairman of the next day which is not a Saturday,  
9           Sunday, or other legal holiday and on which the petition is to be submitted.

10           (b) The chairman shall provide written notice by certified mail, return receipt  
11           requested, to the parish governing authority where the citizens advisory referendum  
12           election is sought on the third day before the petition is submitted to the registrar.

13           D. Each elector, at the time of signing the petition, shall enter his address and  
14           the date on which the elector signed beside or underneath his signature; however, if  
15           a person is unable to write, as provided in R.S. 18:1300.43, the two witnesses shall  
16           date their signatures. In addition, each petition shall be in compliance with the  
17           provisions of R.S. 18:3. In determining the number of qualified electors who signed  
18           the petition, the registrar of voters shall not count any signature which does not  
19           comply with all of the requirements of R.S. 18:3 or bears a date prior to the date on  
20           which the copy of the petition initially was filed with the secretary of state or after  
21           the date of the submission of the petition to the registrar except as otherwise  
22           provided in R.S. 18:1300.42(B). The registrar shall not receive or certify a petition  
23           submitted to him for certification unless it is submitted to him timely.

24           §1300.42. Certification of registered voters; addition or withdrawal of signatures;  
25           designation as a public record; form of names

26           A.(1)(a) The registrar of voters of the parish wherein a citizens advisory  
27           referendum election is sought shall certify on the citizens advisory referendum  
28           petition the number of names appearing thereon, the number of qualified electors of  
29           the parish whose handwritten signatures appear on the petition, and the total number

1 of electors within the parish as of the date of the filing of the petition with the  
2 secretary of state. Each registrar shall indicate on the petition the names appearing  
3 thereon who are not electors of the parish. Each person who participates in the  
4 review of the names on the petition for certification by the registrar as required in  
5 this Section shall initial each of those portions of the petition which the person  
6 reviews for certification by the registrar.

7 (b) The registrar of voters for the parish in which the citizens advisory  
8 referendum election is to be held may request and accept the assistance of employees  
9 of the Department of State and registrars and deputy registrars of voters from other  
10 parishes to complete the certification of the citizens advisory referendum petition.  
11 Each person offering such assistance shall be considered a deputy registrar of the  
12 requesting parish registrar for that purpose only.

13 (2) The registrar of voters shall complete the certification of the citizens  
14 advisory referendum petition within thirty working days after it is presented to him  
15 for that purpose.

16 B. The registrar of voters shall honor the written request of any voter who  
17 either desires to have his handwritten signature stricken from the petition or desires  
18 to have his handwritten signature added to the petition at any time after receipt of the  
19 signed petition as provided in R.S. 18:1300.41(C) but prior to certification of the  
20 petition or within five days after receipt of such signed petition, whichever is earlier.  
21 If the deadline for removing or adding a signature to the petition falls on a Saturday,  
22 Sunday, or legal holiday, then the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal  
23 holiday shall be deemed to be the deadline for removing or adding a signature to the  
24 petition. The written request of the voter shall include the name and address of the  
25 voter, the signature of the voter, the date of birth of the voter, and the date.

26 C. When there is no registrar of voters, or deputy registrar of voters in a  
27 parish, or in case of the absence or inability of that officer, the clerk of the district  
28 court of the parish shall execute the certificate.

1           D. When any officer designated in this Chapter refuses to execute the  
2           certificates provided for, any signer of a citizens advisory referendum petition, or the  
3           chairman or vice chairman designated to represent the signers, may compel the  
4           execution of the certificates by summary process in the district court having  
5           jurisdiction over the officer.

6           E. The registrar of voters shall comply with the provisions of R.S. 18:3 when  
7           determining the number of qualified electors of the voting area who signed the  
8           petition.

9           §1300.43. Signature to a citizens advisory referendum petition

10           No person may sign any name to a citizens advisory referendum other than  
11           his own, except in a case where a person is unable to write, in which case the  
12           incapacitated person shall affix his mark to the petition and the person circulating the  
13           petition shall affix the name and address of the incapacitated person, as well as the  
14           date on which the incapacitated person affixed his mark to the petition, provided he  
15           does so in the presence of two witnesses who shall also sign their names as witnesses  
16           to the mark.

17           §1300.44. Chairman and vice chairman designated in petition; petition designated  
18           as a public record

19           A. The citizens advisory referendum petition shall designate a chairman to  
20           act for the signers of the petition in all matters, and a vice chairman to act on order  
21           of the chairman or in case of the death, disability, absence, or resignation of the  
22           chairman. The petition shall include the full name, signature, and residence address  
23           of the chairman and the vice chairman. The chairman and vice chairman each shall  
24           be a qualified voter in the parish from which the citizens advisory referendum  
25           election is being sought.

26           B. Ninety days following the signature of the first elector, the citizens  
27           advisory referendum petition, including the name, address, and signature of each  
28           elector who has signed thereon, becomes a public record. The chairman, or the vice

1 chairman when acting as the chairman, shall be the custodian thereof. The petition  
2 and the custodian shall be subject to all of the provisions of R.S. 44:31 et seq.

3 C. Upon the filing of the petition pursuant to R.S. 18:1300.41(C)(2), the  
4 chairman, or the vice chairman when acting as chairman, shall no longer be the  
5 custodian thereof.

6 §1300.45. Reason for a citizens advisory referendum stated in petition; form of  
7 question

8 The petition shall contain the question to be submitted to the voters at an  
9 election and shall have a clear statement that the results of the election are for  
10 advisory purposes only and are non-binding. The form and preparation of the  
11 question shall be in the manner prescribed in R.S. 18:1299.1.

12 §1300.46. Results of election

13 The majority of the votes cast shall determine the result of the citizens  
14 advisory referendum election. If the matter on the citizens advisory referendum  
15 ballot receives a majority of votes cast, the majority of voters will be deemed to be  
16 in favor of the matter. Votes shall be tabulated and returns made, declared, and  
17 promulgated as at a general election. The results of the citizens advisory referendum  
18 election are for advisory purposes only.

19 §1300.47. Citizens Advisory referendum elections, conduct in accordance with  
20 Election Code

21 Elections for a citizens advisory referendum shall be held under and in  
22 accordance with the applicable provisions of the Louisiana Election Code, except as  
23 otherwise specifically provided in this Chapter.

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#### 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)]

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HB 544 Original

2026 Regular Session

Owen

**Abstract:** Authorizes a parish governing authority to hold a non-binding citizens advisory referendum election if at least 10% of the registered voters in the parish sign a petition.

Proposed law authorizes a parish governing authority to hold a parish wide referendum for advisory purposes if at least 10% of registered voters within the parish sign a petition expressing their desire to have a certain matter on the ballot. Requires the petition for a citizens advisory referendum to be directed to the parish governing authority. Provides that the petition shall be limited to requesting an election be called and held in the parish for the purpose of putting a question on the ballot and further provides that the petition shall be limited to putting one question on the ballot, per petition. Requires the sec. of state to provide a form approved by the attorney general to be used for the petition to call for a citizens advisory referendum. Further provides for signature requirements for the petition and for the signature threshold for the petition to be accepted. Provides for how a person, who has been designated as chairman in the petition, is to file the petition with the sec. of state. Provides for the duties of the sec. of state after receipt of the petition. Provides for the duties of the registrar of voters after receipt of the petition.

Present law (R.S. 18:3) provides for required information to be contained in every petition submitted to the registrar of voters. Provides for the duties of the registrar of voters relative to certifying signatures on a petition.

Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law provides that the registrar of voters of the parish wherein the citizens advisory referendum is sought shall certify the number of signatures on the petition making sure each signature collected is from an elector who resides in the parish where the citizens advisory referendum is sought. Provides that the registrar of voters for the parish may request and accept assistance from the Dept. of State in order to complete the certification of the petition. Provides deadlines for when certification shall be completed. Provides for procedures to allow the registrar of voters to have a signature added or withdrawn from the petition. Provides for the certification of the petition in a parish where there is no registrar of voters or deputy registrar of voters. Provides for procedures when an officer designated by proposed law refuses to certify the petition.

Proposed law provides that no person can sign any name other than his own to a citizens advisory referendum petition. Provides for procedures when a person is incapable of signing his own name.

Proposed law provides that the citizens advisory referendum petition shall designate a chairman and a vice chairman to act on behalf of the signers of the petition in all matters. Provides that the chairman or vice chairman shall be the custodian of the petition until it is filed.

Present law (R.S. 18:1299.1) provides that the preparation of a question or proposition to be submitted to the voters at an election is the responsibility of the governing authority or other entity calling the election or submitting the question or proposition. Provides that the question or proposition shall be comprised of simple, unbiased, concise, and easily understood language and be in the form of a question. Further provides that the proposition or question shall not exceed 200 words in length and shall not include words that are struck through, underscored, or in boldface type. Provides that the governing authority or other entity shall be responsible for ensuring that the proposition is comprised of simple, unbiased, concise, and easily understood language. Further provides that the sec. of state shall be responsible for ensuring that the proposition does not exceed 200 words in length, does not include words that are struck through, underscored, or in boldface type, and is in the form of a question.

Proposed law retains present law and provides that the petition shall contain the question that is to be submitted to the voters and shall also have a clear statement that the results of the election are for advisory purposes only and are non-binding. Provides that the form and preparation of the question shall be in the same manner prescribed in present law.

Proposed law provides that if the matter on the citizens advisory referendum ballot receives a majority of votes cast it will be deemed that the majority of voters within the parish are in favor of the matter. Provides that the results of the election are for advisory purposes only and are non-binding.

Present law (R.S. 18:402) provides for prohibited election days. Provides for election dates in a gubernatorial election year. Provides for election dates in a congressional election year. Provides for election dates in an odd numbered, nongubernatorial election year. Provides for special election dates. Provides for the election dates for a bond, tax, or other election at which a proposition or question is to be submitted to the voters.

Proposed law retains present law.

(Adds R.S. 18:1300.41-1300.47)