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## DIGEST

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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 Provides for procedures to allow the registrar of voters to have a signature added or withdrawn from the petition.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)