

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 705

BY REPRESENTATIVE NEWELL

LEGISLATIVE POWERS: Provides relative to contempt of the legislature

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 24:4 and 5, relative to contempt of the legislature; to provide for  
3 grounds for contempt; to provide for the maximum penalty for contempt of the  
4 legislature; to provide for duties of the presiding officers; to provide for the  
5 immediate arrest of the accused; and to provide for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 24:4 and 5 are hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

8 §4. Contempt of the legislature; penalties

9 A. Whenever the legislature or either house of the legislature, or whenever  
10 any committee of either house or any joint committee of both houses or any ~~sub-~~  
11 ~~committee~~ subcommittee of any such committee, which committee, joint committee  
12 or ~~sub-committee~~ subcommittee has been specifically and expressly granted the  
13 subpoena power, has summoned any person as a witness to give testimony or to  
14 produce papers or other evidence upon any matter under inquiry before such house,  
15 committee, joint committee or ~~sub-committee~~ subcommittee, such person shall be  
16 guilty of contempt of the legislature if he or she does any of the following:

17 (1) ~~willfully~~ Willfully defaults by failing to appear or to produce papers or  
18 other evidence, as ordered, ~~or~~.

19 (2) ~~having~~ Having appeared, refuses to take the oath or affirmation of a  
20 witness, ~~or~~.

1           (3) ~~having~~ Having appeared, refuses to answer any question pertinent to the  
2 question under inquiry.

3           B. A person shall be guilty of contempt of the legislature if he or she does  
4 any of the following:

5           (1) Arrests or causes the arrest of a member or officer of the legislature in  
6 violation of Article III, Section 8 of the Constitution of Louisiana.

7           (2) Engages in disorderly conduct interrupting the proceedings of either  
8 house or a committee thereof.

9           (3) Gives or offers a bribe to a member or otherwise attempts to directly or  
10 indirectly control or influence a member in casting his vote.

11           C. B: Whoever is found guilty of contempt of the legislature under the  
12 provisions of this ~~section~~ Section shall be punished by a fine of not more than ~~one~~  
13 fifty thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

14           D. C: The provisions of R.S. 24:4 through R.S. 24:6 are hereby declared to  
15 be supplemental to the powers of the legislature and of the senate and of the house  
16 of representatives to punish for contempt, and the legislature hereby reserves to itself  
17 and to the senate and to the house of representatives all inherent and all  
18 constitutional powers to punish for contempt.

19           §5. Certification of facts of contempt; prosecution; arrest

20           Whenever a statement of facts alleged to constitute contempt under R.S. 24:4  
21 is reported to either house of the legislature while the legislature is in session, or  
22 whenever, while the legislature is not in session, such statement is reported to and  
23 filed with the president of the senate or the speaker of the house of representatives,  
24 ~~said~~ the president or speaker, as the case may be, shall do the following:

25           (1) Certify ~~certify~~ the statement to the district attorney of a district where  
26 venue lies, as provided in the general laws governing venue or as provided by R.S.  
27 24:6 in the case of offenses defined in R.S. 24:4(A), and the district attorney shall  
28 institute and prosecute a criminal proceeding against the accused for contempt of the  
29 legislature under the provisions of R.S. 24:4.

- 1                   (2) Certify the statement to the appropriate law enforcement officer, who  
 2                   shall immediately arrest the accused for contempt of the legislature under the  
 3                   provisions of R.S. 24:4.

## 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)]

HB 705 Original

2026 Regular Session

Newell

**Abstract:** Provides that the arrest of a member, engagement in disorderly conduct, and bribery of a member are grounds for contempt of the legislature and provides for the arrest of a person found to be in contempt of the legislature.

Present law provides that whenever the legislature or either house of the legislature, or whenever any committee of either house or any joint committee of both houses or any subcommittee of any such committee, which committee, joint committee or subcommittee has been specifically and expressly granted the subpoena power, has summoned any person as a witness to give testimony or to produce papers or other evidence upon any matter under inquiry before such house, committee, joint committee or subcommittee, such person shall be guilty of contempt of the legislature if he or she willfully defaults by failing to appear or to produce papers or other evidence, refuses to take the oath or affirmation of a witness, or refuses to answer any question pertinent to the question under inquiry.

Proposed law additionally provides that a person may be held in contempt if he does any of the following:

- (1) Arrests or causes the arrest of a member or officer of the legislature in violation of present constitution provision that a member of the legislature shall be privileged from arrest, except for felony, during his attendance at sessions and committee meetings of his house and while going to and from them and that no member shall be questioned elsewhere for any speech in either house.
- (2) Engages in disorderly conduct interrupting the proceedings of either house or a committee thereof.
- (3) Gives or offers a bribe to a member or otherwise attempt to directly or indirectly control or influence a member in casting his vote.

Present law provides that whoever is found guilty of contempt of the legislature shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

Proposed law increases the criminal fine to \$50,000.

Present law provides that whenever a statement of facts alleged to constitute contempt under present law is reported to either house of the legislature while the legislature is in session, or whenever, while the legislature is not in session, such statement is reported to and filed with the president of the senate or the speaker of the house of representatives, said president or speaker, as the case may be, shall certify the statement to the district attorney of a district where venue lies, and the district attorney shall institute and prosecute a criminal proceeding against the accused for contempt of the legislature.

Proposed law additionally requires the president or speaker to certify the statement to the appropriate law enforcement officer, who shall immediately arrest the accused for contempt of the legislature.

(Amends R.S. 24:4 and 5)