
DIGEST

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Duplessis

SB No. 653

Present law provides that in addition to salary, per diem, and all other allowances, each member of the legislature shall be paid an expense allowance of \$500 per month for office space, utilities, and for other expenses related to holding or conduct of his office. Proposed law retains present expense allowance for members of the House of Representatives and increases monthly office expense account to \$1000 for members of the Senate.

Present law provides that each legislator may employ one or more legislative assistants, who shall be employed as unclassified state employees. Present law provides for the salary and eligibility of such assistant or assistants to benefits.

Proposed law retains present law and provides for similar proposed law provisions for one or more office clerical staff members for senators in addition to a legislative assistant or assistants as provided below. Authorizes each member of the Senate to employ one or more office clerical staff members. Provides that the total salary of such clerical staff shall not exceed the applicable monthly salary as follows:

<u>STEP</u>	<u>MONTHLY SALARY</u>
Base	\$ 2,000
First	\$ 2,083
Second	\$ 2,169
Third	\$ 2,259
Fourth	\$ 2,352
Fifth	\$ 2,450
Sixth	\$ 2,551
Seventh	\$ 2,657
Eighth	\$ 2,767
Ninth	\$ 2,881
Maximum	\$ 3,000

Proposed law provides that each July first, the amount for each step shall be adjusted when, and to the extent of, any increase in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items based on the preceding calendar year. Further provides that any senator who has the maximum step available to him for his office clerical staff shall have available a step increase of 4% per year for the salary available for his office clerical staff. Provides that each senator determines the qualifications and the duties of his office clerical staff; however, prohibits a person who is a member of the family of the senator from serving as his office clerical staff. Provides that each office clerical staff member shall be paid a salary fixed by the senator, provided that the salary for any one office clerical staff member shall not exceed the monthly salary for the base step plus the equivalent of one step for each year of his employment as a office clerical staff member, or the equivalent of one step for each year of the employing senator's service as a legislator, at the option of the employing senator. Provides that when more than one office clerical staff member is employed by a senator, the total salary shall not exceed such salary by all of these office clerical staff members. Provides that when part-time help or contractual services are used, the total payments shall not exceed an amount equal to the base salary.

Proposed law provides that the salary of each office clerical staff member be paid from the funds of the Senate by check to each individual office clerical staff member whose employment and salary have been certified by the senator to the president of the Senate. Provides for the check to be signed by another member of the Senate designated by the president and countersigned by the president of the Senate. Specifies that proposed law does not prohibit the use of contractual secretarial services in lieu of one or more office clerical staff, nor preclude two or more senators from cooperatively employing office clerical staff,

who may be paid in excess of the salary limits above, but not in excess of the salary limits available to the cooperating senators. Requires any change of person or salary shall be reported to the president within 10 days and provides for the president to hold such reports during the term of office of the senator involved.

Proposed law authorizes each office clerical staff member employed full time who has at least one year of experience or who receives at least 80% of the total compensation available to the employing senator for his office clerical staff, including all step increases authorized by law, may participate in the state's group life, health, and hospitalization insurance program and the state employees' retirement system. Provides that all office clerical staff shall be eligible for workers' compensation coverage as state employees upon employment.

Proposed law specifies that any costs for the provision of retirement benefits shall be funded with additional employer contributions in compliance with the present constitution (Art. X, §29(E)(5)(b)).

Effective July 1, 2008.

(Amends R.S. 24:31.4(A) and (C); Adds R.S. 24:31.10)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Finance to the original bill.

1. Eliminates the expense allowance increase for members of the House of Representatives - retains existing \$500 per month allowance.
2. Limits expense allowance increase for Senate members to \$500 per month.
3. Clarifies eligibility for certain group life, health, and hospitalization coverage for legislative assistants and office clerical staff.

Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill.

1. Changes the effective date of the Act from January 1, 2009, to July 1, 2008.
2. Technical amendments.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs to the reengrossed bill.

1. Removes all provisions applying to legislative assistants.
2. Provides for separate provisions (similar to those for legislative assistants) for additional office clerical staff for members of the Senate.