
DIGEST

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Montoucet

HB No. 424

Abstract: Provides for the La. French Language Services Program to be implemented by the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to identify French-speaking employees in state departments who will provide services in French or assist other employees in providing services to French-speaking persons.

Proposed law provides for establishment of the La. French Language Services Program for the following purposes:

- (1) To provide state government services to French-speaking citizens and visitors in the French language, to the extent practicable.
- (2) To assist La. citizens who speak French in dealing with and receiving services from state government so as to support the long-term sustainability of La.'s historic French cultural heritage.
- (3) To assist French-speaking visitors and thus to promote an increase in tourism and greater investment in the state from Francophone countries.

Proposed law requires the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT), in concert with and under the guidance of the Council for the Development of French in La. (CODOFIL), to develop and provide for implementation of a program for provision of services of state government in the French language. Provides that DCRT shall work cooperatively with the departments of state government and requires such departments to cooperate with DCRT. Provides that DCRT shall also participate in the program in the same manner as other departments.

Proposed law requires DCRT to:

- (1) Request each state department to identify its employees who speak French with sufficient fluency to provide or assist others in providing department services to French-speaking persons and assist the departments in identifying such employees. Requires DCRT to request CODOFIL to assist the state departments in identifying such employees.
- (2) Develop guidelines for program implementation which shall address such issues as priorities in implementing the program in service areas with greater numbers of French-speaking citizens or visitors and for services dealing with such matters as health, safety, compliance with regulations, or complexity of processes. Specifies that implementation guidelines shall also address dealing with limited department resources.
- (3) Provide for appropriate insignia, such as a badge with the word "Bienvenue" or "Bonjour" to identify employees who will assist French-speaking clients in accessing and using department services. Requires state departments to provide procedures for recognition of the employees entitled to wear such insignia which may include recognition of the employee's language skills by CODOFIL.
- (4) Provide for implementation of the program by state departments in accordance with the guidelines developed as provided in proposed law and subject to the resources available to individual departments.
- (5) Urge the convention and visitors bureaus throughout the state to implement a similar program.

Proposed law provides that DCRT shall make recommendations for improving the provision of French language services to state departments, the governor, and the legislature.

Proposed law authorizes DCRT to institute an annual designation for the state department, agency, or office that best accomplishes the program's purposes (the Sceau d'excellence or Seal of excellence). Specifies that in making the designation, consideration also be given to public visibility and recognition for the program within the department, agency, or office and the proportion of employees who are participating.

(Adds R.S. 25:671-674)