

PART XXXX

Sec. XXXX-13. 20-A MRSA c. 103-A is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 103-A **REGIONAL SCHOOL UNITS**

SUBCHAPTER 3 **school governance; program**

§ 1471. Regional school unit board

A regional school unit board must be established in accordance with this section.

1. Size. Following the initial certification of a regional school unit, any change in the size, composition or apportionment of the regional school unit board must be determined by a joint meeting of all the municipalities within the regional school unit. Unless determined otherwise pursuant to section 1472, each regional school unit board must include at least one director from each municipality or subdistrict.

2. Term of office. In municipalities with annual elections, directors serve 3-year terms. In municipalities with biennial elections, directors serve 4-year terms. A director serves until a successor is elected and qualified.

3. Compensation . Compensation for attendance at a regional school unit board meeting must be between \$10 and \$25 per meeting for each director. Whenever the directors recommend increasing their compensation, they shall submit their recommendation to the voters in the regional school unit for approval.

A. On notification by the regional school unit board, the municipal officers shall, at the next regular or special town meeting or city election, prepare a warrant or ballot for the purpose of voting on the proposed increase. The question must be in the following form.

”Do you favor paying a member of the regional school unit board of directors compensation at the rate of \$.... for each meeting that member attends?”

B. An increase in compensation is not effective unless approved by a majority of the voters voting on the question set out in paragraph A.

4. Secretary and treasurer . The superintendent serves as secretary and treasurer of the regional school unit board and shall give a bond to the regional school unit board of a sum and with the sureties as the regional school unit determines. The bond must be deposited with the chair of the regional school unit board. The expense of that bond must be paid by the regional school unit. The bond premium, compensation paid directors for attendance at meetings and expenses of the regional school unit must be paid from funds of the regional school unit by the treasurer on vouchers presented and certified by the superintendent and approved by a majority of the regional school unit board or a

finance committee duly elected annually by that board.

5. Oath of office . Before a newly elected director's first regional school unit board meeting, that director must take the following oath or affirmation before a dedimus justice or notary public.

"I do swear that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my abilities the duties incumbent on me as a regional school unit board director of (name of regional school unit) according to the Constitution of Maine and laws of this State, so help me God."

A. A director shall take the oath or affirmation and return a certificate documenting that the oath or affirmation has been taken to the secretary of the regional school unit to place in the regional school unit board records.

B. If a director is conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, the word "affirm" may be used instead of "swear" and the words "this I do under the pains and penalty of perjury" may be used instead of the words "so help me God."

6. Election of officers. The regional school unit board shall elect a chair and vice-chair and other officers as may be necessary.

§ 1472. Methods of apportionment

1. Method A: subdistrict representation. Under the method of representation referred to as "Method A," directors represent subdistricts.

A. The subdistricts, as far as practicable, must be whole municipalities. If the municipalities are divided into subdistricts, then they must be divided into subdistricts of approximately equal size as determined by the latest Federal Decennial Census or Federal Estimated Census. The municipal officers shall provide a separate voting place for each subdistrict of the municipality.

B. The boundaries of each subdistrict must be determined by a majority vote of the reapportionment committee under section 1475. Each subdistrict must have one director, except that in a municipality composed of 2 or more subdistricts, the joint meeting may authorize the election of directors-at-large.

2. Method B: weighted votes. Under the method of representation referred to as "Method B," directors cast weighted votes.

A. The reapportionment committee under section 1475 shall apportion 1,000 votes among all the members of the board. The ratio of the number of votes cast by the directors representing a municipality in relation to the number 1,000 must be the same ratio to the nearest whole number as the population of the municipality is in relation to the population of all municipalities in the regional school unit, as determined by the latest Federal Decennial Census or Federal Estimated Census.

B. To ensure the use of whole numbers, the 1,000 votes apportioned among the board members may not be increased or decreased by more than 5 votes.

C. A plan may not permit the voting power of any director to exceed by more than 2% the percentage of voting power the director would have if all 1,000 votes were apportioned equally among the directors.

D. In a municipality served by 2 or more directors, the votes cast by them must be divided equally among them. The directors are elected at large within the municipality unless otherwise provided by municipal charter.

3. Method C: at-large voting . Under the method of representation referred to as “Method C,” directors are elected at large by all of the voters in the regional school unit.

4. Method D: other. Under the method of representation referred to as “Method D,” directors are elected by any method other than those set forth in subsections 1, 2 and 3 that meets the requirements of the one-person, one-vote principle.

§ 1473. Election

For the purpose of nominations, regional school unit board directors are considered municipal officials and must be nominated in accordance with Title 30-A, chapter 121 or with a municipal charter, whichever is applicable.

1. Initial meeting on regional school unit formation. On the election of the regional school unit board of directors, the clerk of each municipality within the regional school unit shall forward the names and addresses of the directors elected for that municipality to the state board with other data with regard to their election as the state board may require. On receipt of the names and addresses of all of the directors, the state board shall set a time, place and date for the first meeting of the directors and give notice to the directors in writing, sent by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the addresses provided by the municipalities.

2. Special provisions. In the election for representation under the methods provided under section 1472, the provisions of this subsection apply.

A. In an election under Method A pursuant to section 1472, subsection 1:

(1) Within 60 days, but no earlier than 45 days after notification by the regional school unit board of the approval of the reapportionment plan under section 1475, the municipal officers shall call a special election to elect directors to serve under the plan for the regional school unit;

(2) Nomination papers must be furnished by the secretary of the regional school unit at least 10 days before the deadline for filing nomination papers. Notwithstanding any other section of this Title, directors must be nominated by obtaining a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 50 signatures of registered voters residing within a subdistrict. The secretary shall notify the municipal officers of the names of candidates in each subdistrict;

(3) The ballots must be prepared in accordance with subparagraph (7);

(4) The clerks of each municipality shall forward to the secretary of the regional school unit the results of the vote by subdistrict;

(5) The regional school unit board shall meet and total the votes cast for each candidate within each subdistrict and shall immediately notify the clerks in each municipality, the candidates and the commissioner of the results of the vote;

(6) The terms of the directors elected under the original municipal representation system cease on the date that the newly elected directors are sworn into office; and

(7) Notwithstanding any other provision of statute, directors must be elected by secret ballot. The ballots must be prepared for and distributed to the municipalities or subdistricts by the secretary of the regional school unit.

B. In an election under Method B pursuant to section 1472, subsection 2, a reduction in the number of directors, the addition of directors and the terms of office of additional directors must be in accordance with this chapter.

C. In an election under Method C pursuant to section 1472, subsection 3:

(1) Nominations for directors must be made on petitions provided by the regional school unit secretary. The petitions must be signed as provided in Title 30-A, section 2528, subsection 4 or, if the candidate is a voting resident in a municipality having a population of less than 200, signed by at least 20% of the registered voters of that municipality;

(2) The petitions must be submitted to the registrar of voters in the respective municipalities for certification of the voting residence of the nominee and of the voters signing the petition;

(3) The registrar of voters must return the certified petitions to the regional school unit secretary not later than 30 days prior to the date of the annual election to be held in the municipality;

(4) The ballots must be prepared and distributed by the regional school unit secretary. It must give the number of offices to be filled and list the candidates by the municipality or subdistrict in which they are resident;

(5) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, regional school unit board directors must be elected by secret ballot;

(6) If member municipalities do not all conduct the election for directors on the same date, then all ballots cast in the elections must be impounded by the clerk of each municipality:

(a) After all municipalities have voted, the clerks and one or more election supervisors designated by the municipal officers of each municipality shall meet at an agreed-upon location and tally the ballots;

(b) The tally must be completed within one day of the last member municipality election;

(c) The election supervisors shall select from among their members a chair, who shall supervise the tally of ballots; and

(d) The clerk of each municipality shall as promptly as possible after the election certify to the regional school unit board the result of the voting in that municipality; and

(7) Any recount petitions must be filed with the secretary of the regional school unit, and recounts must be conducted in each member municipality in accordance with the applicable laws.

§ 1474. Vacancies

1. Definition of vacancy. A vacancy on a regional school unit board occurs:

A. When the term of office of a regional school unit board director expires;

B. When a regional school unit board director changes residency from the municipality or subdistrict from which elected. Evidence that an individual is registered to vote in a municipality is prima facie evidence of that individual's residency;

C. On the death of a regional school unit board director; or

D. When a regional school unit board director resigns.

In addition to paragraphs A, B, C and D, except in municipalities having a municipal charter, when a director is absent without excuse from 3 consecutive regular board meetings, the regional school unit board may declare that a vacancy exists.

2. Regional school unit board. The regional school unit board shall notify the municipal officers of the municipalities within the regional school unit of a vacancy before the annual town meeting or before the regular municipal election.

3. Filling vacancies. A vacancy on a regional school unit board must be filled according to this subsection.

A. The municipal officers of the municipality in which the director resided shall select an interim director for the municipality or subdistrict to serve until the next annual municipal election. The interim director shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified.

B. The municipal officers shall provide at the next municipal or subdistrict election for the election of a director to fill the vacancy.

§ 1475. Reapportionment

The commissioner shall determine the necessity for reapportionment.

1. Duties of commissioner. The commissioner shall determine if a regional school unit is apportioned in accordance with the one-person, one-vote principle if:

A. The commissioner receives a request by the regional school unit board; or

B. The commissioner receives a petition signed by a number of regional school unit voters equal to at least 10% of the voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election in the regional school unit.

In addition to a determination initiated by a request pursuant to paragraph A or a petition pursuant to paragraph B, the commissioner may, of the commissioner's own accord, determine that a regional school unit is not apportioned according to the one-person, one-vote principle.

The commissioner shall make a determination under paragraph A or B within 30 days of receiving the request or the petition.

2. Awaiting census results. If the commissioner receives a request within 12 months before a Federal Decennial Census or Federal Estimated Census, the commissioner may wait until after the new census figures are available to make a determination under subsection 1.

3. Findings and order. If the commissioner finds the regional school unit representation is not apportioned in accordance with the principle of one person, one vote, the commissioner, within 7 days of that decision, shall notify the superintendent of the regional school unit of the finding and order the superintendent to notify the municipal officers in each municipality in the regional school unit and the regional school unit board to create a reapportionment committee. The superintendent's notification must include the commissioner's notification, the information provided pursuant to subsection 6 and the time and place for the first meeting of the committee, which must be held not later than 20 days after the notification.

4. Reapportionment committee membership. The reapportionment committee consists of one municipal officer and one citizen from each member municipality, chosen by the respective municipal officers, and one director from each municipality, chosen by the board of directors. The appointments must be made prior to the first meeting of the committee.

5. Quorum. A majority of the reapportionment committee constitutes a quorum.

6. Duties of commissioner . The commissioner shall provide the superintendent of the regional school unit with the most recent Federal Decennial Census or Federal Estimated Census figures for each municipality in the regional school unit and at least one recommended apportionment plan.

7. Duties of the reapportionment committee. The reapportionment committee shall:

A. Elect a chair and secretary and may adopt suitable rules of procedure;

B. Consider and by majority vote adopt a reapportionment plan including the method of representation, total number of directors and number of directors representing each municipality or subdistrict; and

C. Within 90 days of the first meeting, send a report of its reapportionment plan to the state board for approval. It may, within the 90-day limit, submit alternative plans for apportionment.

8. Commissioner approval. The commissioner shall approve or disapprove the reapportionment committee plan under subsection 7 within 30 days of receiving it.

9. Failure to gain commissioner approval. If a reapportionment plan has not been adopted by the reapportionment committee or approved by the commissioner within the time limits of subsection 7, the commissioner shall prepare a suitable plan.

10. Putting the approved plan into effect. On approval of a reapportionment plan, the commissioner shall send a certified copy to the municipal officers and regional school unit board. The original reapportionment plan must be retained in the department files.

A. The reapportionment plan takes effect immediately upon approval. The reapportionment committee shall determine the terms of the directors to be elected at the next annual municipal elections so as to comply with this chapter.

B. If the approved reapportionment plan requires a reduction of the number of directors to be elected in a municipality, the reduction must be achieved in accordance with this paragraph.

(1) If possible, the reduction must be achieved by the voluntary resignation of one or more of the directors.

(2) If the reduction cannot be achieved in accordance with subparagraph (1) and the plan is approved and filed less than 30 days prior to the annual municipal election, the number of open positions to be filled by the election process must be reduced to the number required by the approved plan.

(3) If the reduction cannot be achieved in accordance with subparagraph (1) or (2), or a combination of the 2, all of the remaining existing directors representing the municipality shall choose by lot which directors' terms must terminate.

C. If the approved reapportionment plan requires that additional directors be elected in a municipality, the municipal officers shall fill the vacancies by appointment. A new director serves until a successor is elected and qualified at the next annual municipal election.

D. The reapportionment committee is dissolved after the approved reapportionment plan is implemented.

11. Duties of present directors during reapportionment. The regional school unit board, during the reapportionment of its membership, serves as the legal representative of the regional school unit until the reapportionment is completed. The board shall carry out all business of the regional school unit, including the borrowing of funds that may be required during the period of reapportionment.

12. State board review of commissioner's decisions. A regional school unit board or

interested parties may request that the state board reconsider decisions made by the commissioner under this section. The state board has the authority to overturn a decision made by the commissioner. In exercising this power, the state board is limited by this section.

§ 1476. Powers and duties

The regional school unit board:

- 1. Regional school unit name.** May select an unofficial name for the regional school unit;
- 2. Finance committee.** May elect a finance committee of 3 or more members, who must be directors;
- 3. Operating schools.** Shall authorize and oversee the operation of schools within the regional school unit;
- 4. Purchase land outside the regional school unit.** May purchase land outside of the geographical limits of the regional school unit and erect a school on that land if, because of the location of other schools within the regional school unit or transportation difficulties, a school within the geographical limits of the regional school unit would not be in the best interests of the regional school unit community;
- 5. Bylaws.** Shall adopt bylaws for the regulation of the affairs of the regional school unit board and the conduct of its business; and
- 6. Gifts.** May accept and receive money or other property, outright or in trust, for any specified benevolent or educational purpose. The regional school unit board shall comply with this subsection in accepting gifts.
 - A.** If the regional school unit board receives written notice from a prospective donor or a representative of the donor of a proposed gift, the regional school unit board shall submit the matter to its next regular meeting or shall call a special meeting and shall, within 10 days after the meeting, send written notice to the prospective donor or representative of its acceptance or rejection.
 - B.** If the gift is in trust, the regional school unit board shall cause the trust funds to be deposited or invested according to Title 30-A, chapter 223, subchapter 3-A.
 - (1)** Unless prohibited by a trust instrument, the regional school unit may treat any 2 or more trust funds as a single fund for the purposes of investment.
 - (2)** After deduction for management expenses, any interest earned or capital gains realized must be prorated among the various trust funds.
 - (3)** Property or securities included in the corpus of a trust fund must be retained where the trust instrument so provides.

(4) Unless otherwise specified in the trust instrument, only the annual income from the trust fund may be spent.

(5) If the regional school unit fails to comply with the terms of the trust instrument, the trust fund reverts to the donor or the donor's heirs.

C. If the money or other property is a conditional gift for any specified benevolent or educational purpose, this paragraph applies.

(1) Prior to the acceptance of a gift, the regional school unit board must obtain approval of the legislative body of the regional school unit.

(2) When the donor's part of the agreement respecting the execution of the conditional gift has been completed, the regional school unit shall perpetually comply with, and may raise money to carry into effect, the conditions upon which it was made.

(3) Unless otherwise specified by its terms, a conditional gift of money must be deposited or invested according to Title 30-A, chapter 223, subchapter 3-A.

§ 1477. Quorum

A majority of the regional school unit board directors in number and voting power constitutes a quorum.

§ 1478. Local school committees

A regional school unit board may create local school committees and specify their powers and duties.

§ 1479. Program

A regional school unit shall maintain a program that includes kindergarten to grade 12.

1. Secondary school. A secondary school facility may be operated as a 4-year school, as a 6-year school for grades 7 to 12 or as 2 or more 3-year schools, except that students living in an area remote from a public school may be provided for under section 5204.

2. Contracts for secondary school programs. In addition to the provisions for a secondary school facility set forth in subsection 1, a regional school unit may contract with a nearby regional school unit or with a private school approved for tuition purposes for all or some of its secondary school students. The contract may run from a period of 2 to 10 years. The contract must also comply with section 2703 and may provide for the formation of a joint committee in accordance with section 2704. A regional school unit in which a previous education unit has contracted for secondary school programs is bound by the terms of that contract, unless otherwise negotiated by the parties.

3. Expiration of contract. After July 1, 2008, if a contract between a previous education unit and another previous education unit or a private school approved for tuition purposes expires, and the previous education unit that was the sending unit is a member of a regional school unit under this

chapter, the provisions of this subsection apply.

A. If the option of attending a public school in another school administrative unit or a private school approved for tuition purposes subject to chapter 219 was available to students in the previous education unit, that option continues to be available to students who reside in the municipalities that composed the previous education unit after the municipality's inclusion in the regional school unit.

B. The regional school unit may negotiate the contract pursuant to chapter 115.

4. Absence of contract; maintenance of school choice opportunities. A student who resides in a school administrative unit that does not maintain that student's grade from kindergarten to grade 12, and that does not enter into a contract for the education of its students pursuant to this chapter, has the option of attending a public school in another school administrative unit or private school approved for tuition purposes subject to the provisions of chapter 219 if that option was available from the previous school unit for the area in which that student resides.

5. Additional expense. If, pursuant to subsection 4, a student attends a public school in another school administrative unit or private school approved for tuition purposes subject to the provisions of chapter 219, and the number of secondary school students from one or more municipalities in a regional school unit that attend a public school in a different school administrative unit or an approved private school is less than all the secondary school students in the regional school unit, the sending municipality of the regional school unit is responsible for the additional expense calculated under this subsection.

A. For each secondary school student who attends a public school in another school administrative unit, the sending regional school unit is responsible for an amount equal to the number of secondary school students from that regional school unit multiplied by the amount that the receiving regional school unit's tuition rate pursuant to section 5805 exceeds the amount of the sending regional school unit's tuition rate pursuant to section 5805.

B. For each secondary school student who attends a private school approved for tuition purposes subject to the provisions of chapter 219, the sending regional school unit is responsible for an amount equal to the number of secondary school students from the regional school unit attending the private school multiplied by the amount that the private school's tuition rate pursuant to section 5806, or the tuition rate per the contract, if less, exceeds the amount of the sending regional school unit's tuition rate pursuant to section 5805.

Any additional expense may not be included in the regional school unit budget when determining each member municipality's local contribution.

Any additional expense must be paid by the responsible municipality in equal monthly amounts unless the regional school unit and the member municipality agree to another payment schedule.