

House File 501 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 501
BY SORENSEN

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to school districts, including by
2 modifying provisions related to school district dissolution
3 proposals and election dates for school district mergers,
4 consolidations, or dissolutions.
5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. Section 275.18, subsection 1, Code 2025, is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 1. When the boundaries of the territory to be included in
4 a proposed school corporation and the number and method of
5 the election of the school directors of the proposed school
6 corporation have been determined as provided in this chapter,
7 the area education agency administrator with whom the petition
8 is filed shall give written notice of the election to the
9 county commissioner of elections of the county in the proposed
10 school corporation which has the greatest taxable base. The
11 question shall be submitted to the voters at an election held
12 on a date specified in section 39.2, subsection 4, paragraph
13 "c" in the calendar year prior to the calendar year in which
14 the reorganization will take effect; provided, however, that if
15 the question relates to the merger or consolidation of school
16 districts, the question shall be submitted to the voters at an
17 election held on a date determined by the county commissioner of
18 elections that is in the calendar year prior to the calendar year
19 in which the merger or consolidation will take effect.

20 Sec. 2. Section 275.53, subsection 1, Code 2025, is amended
21 to read as follows:

22 1. a. The Within one year after the date of the
23 organizational meeting of the commission, the commission shall
24 send a copy of its agree upon and develop a dissolution proposal
25 or shall inform the board that it cannot agree upon a dissolution
26 proposal not later than one year following the date of the
27 organizational meeting of the commission and send a copy of the
28 dissolution proposal to the department of education for approval.
29 The department of education shall either approve the dissolution
30 proposal or recommend changes to the dissolution proposal. If
31 the department of education recommends changes to the dissolution
32 proposal, the commission shall make such changes and send the
33 revised dissolution proposal to the department of education for
34 approval. Once the department of education has approved the
35 dissolution proposal, the commission shall file a copy of the

1 dissolution proposal with the board.

2 b. Notwithstanding paragraph "a", if the commission cannot
3 agree upon a dissolution proposal within one year after the date
4 of the organizational meeting of the commission, the commission
5 shall inform the board that it cannot agree upon a dissolution
6 proposal.

7 c. If the dissolving school district has outstanding bonds
8 issued under section ~~423E.5~~ or 423F.4, the proposal shall require
9 each school district receiving territory from the dissolving
10 district to assume liability for the payment of a portion of
11 such bonds that is equal to the percentage of the total number
12 of resident pupils from the dissolving district who lived in
13 the territory received during the last year of the dissolving
14 district's existence.

15 d. The commission shall also send a copy of the approved
16 dissolution proposal to the boards of directors of all school
17 districts to which area of the dissolving school district will
18 be attached. If the board of a district to which area of
19 the dissolving school district will be attached objects to the
20 attachment, within ten days following receipt of the dissolution
21 proposal the board shall send its objections in writing to
22 ~~the commission~~ department of education. ~~The commission may~~
23 department of education shall consider the objections and may
24 direct the commission to modify the dissolution proposal if
25 the department of education determines that the objections
26 are reasonable. If the dissolution proposal is modified, the
27 commission shall notify the boards of directors of all school
28 districts to which area of the dissolving school district will be
29 attached.

30 Sec. 3. Section 275.55, subsection 1, Code 2025, is amended
31 to read as follows:

32 1. After the final hearing on the dissolution proposal, the
33 board of the school district shall submit the proposition to the
34 voters at ~~the next election held on a date specified in section~~
35 ~~39.2, subsection 4, paragraph "c"~~ an election held on a date

1 determined by the county commissioner of elections. However, the
2 date of the final hearing on the dissolution proposal must be not
3 less than thirty nor more than sixty days before the election.
4 The proposition submitted to the voters residing in the school
5 district shall describe each separate area to be attached to a
6 contiguous school district and shall name the school district to
7 which it will be attached. In addition to the description, a map
8 may be included in the summary of the question on the ballot.

9 EXPLANATION

10 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
11 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

12 This bill relates to school districts, including by modifying
13 provisions related to school district dissolution proposals and
14 election dates for school district mergers, consolidations, or
15 dissolutions.

16 Current law requires that elections related to school district
17 mergers, consolidations, or dissolutions must be held, in
18 odd-numbered years, on the first Tuesday in March, the second
19 Tuesday in September, or the first Tuesday after the first
20 Monday in November, and in even-numbered years, on the first
21 Tuesday in March, or the second Tuesday in September. The bill
22 modifies these provisions to provide that elections related to
23 school district mergers or consolidations must be held on a date
24 determined by the county commissioner of elections that is in
25 the calendar year prior to the calendar year in which the merger
26 or consolidation will take effect, and that elections related to
27 school district dissolutions must be held on a date determined by
28 the county commissioner of elections.

29 Current law requires a school district dissolution commission
30 to send a copy of its dissolution proposal to the board of
31 directors of the school district, or inform the board that it
32 cannot agree upon a dissolution proposal, not later than one year
33 following the date of the commission's organizational meeting.
34 Current law also requires the commission to send a copy of the
35 proposal to the boards of directors of all school districts to

1 which area of the dissolving school district will be attached,
2 and if the board to which area of the dissolving school district
3 will be attached objects to the attachment, the board is required
4 to send its objections in writing to the commission. The bill
5 modifies this provision to provide that, within one year after
6 the date of the organizational meeting of the commission, the
7 commission is required to agree upon and develop a dissolution
8 proposal and send a copy of the proposal to the department of
9 education (DE) for approval. DE is required to either approve
10 the proposal or recommend changes. Once DE has approved the
11 proposal, the bill requires the commission to file a copy of the
12 proposal with the board of directors of the school district and
13 send a copy of the approved proposal to the boards of directors
14 of all school districts to which area of the dissolving school
15 district will be attached. If the commission cannot agree upon
16 a proposal within one year after the date of the organizational
17 meeting, the commission is required to inform the board of
18 directors of the school district that it cannot agree. If the
19 board of directors of a district to which area of the dissolving
20 school district will be attached objects to the attachment, the
21 board is required to send its objections in writing to DE, and
22 DE is required to consider the objections and may direct the
23 commission to modify the proposal if DE determines that the
24 objections are reasonable.