

House Bill 726

By: Representatives Scoggins of the 14th, Werkheiser of the 157th, Cheokas of the 138th,
Rhodes of the 120th, Greene of the 151st, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 elections and primaries generally, so as to provide for the ability of the judge of the probate
3 court to cease acting as superintendent of elections; to provide for the creation of a board of
4 elections and the selection and appointment of members to take the place of the judge of the
5 probate court; to provide for the qualification, terms, and removal of members; to provide
6 for oaths and privileges; to provide for meetings, procedures, and vacancies; to relieve the
7 judge of the probate court of certain powers and duties with regard to elections and to
8 provide for the transfer of functions to the newly created board; to provide for certain
9 expenditures of public funds; to provide for compensation of members of the board and
10 personnel; to provide for offices and equipment; to provide for the board's performance of
11 certain functions and duties for certain municipalities; to provide for related matters; to
12 repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

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Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elections and primaries generally, is amended in Part 3 of Article 2, relating to superintendents, by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"21-2-78.

(a) A judge of the probate court who serves as superintendent and who no longer desires to serve as superintendent may terminate such service by giving notice in writing to the county governing authority. The termination date shall be stated in the notice and shall be on July 1 of an odd-numbered year that is at least 24 months after the date of the notice. On and after July 1 of the odd-numbered year specified, the duties of superintendent shall be transferred from the judge of the probate court to either a county board of elections or county board of elections and registration established under Code Section 21-2-40, a joint county-municipal board of elections or joint county-municipal board of elections and registration established under Code Section 21-2-45, or, if no such board has been created, the board of elections created by this Code section.

(b) In those counties in which the judge of the probate court chooses to cease serving as superintendent and the county does not create a board under Code Section 21-2-40 or 21-2-45 by local Act to take over such duties, there is created in such county a board of elections to perform the duties of superintendent.

(c) The board created by subsection (b) of this Code section shall have the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the superintendent for the county under this chapter which was previously exercised by the judge of the probate court.

(d)(1) The board shall be composed of five members, each of whom shall be an elector and resident of the county at the time of appointment and for at least one year prior thereto, and who shall be appointed as provided in this subsection.

(2) Two members of the board shall be nominated by the political party whose candidate for the office of Governor at the last election for such office received the highest number

41 of votes cast for such office within the county. Two members of the board shall be
42 nominated by the political party whose candidate for the office of Governor at the last
43 election for such office received the second highest number of votes cast for such office
44 within the county. The nomination of the two respective members by a political party
45 shall be submitted by the county executive committee of the respective political party at
46 least 30 days before the beginning of the term of office or within 30 days after the
47 creation of a vacancy in the office and shall be immediately considered by the governing
48 authority of the county for approval at its next regular or called meeting. Should the
49 commissioners fail to approve a nominee by a majority vote, a new nominee shall be
50 nominated and submitted for approval by the appropriate political party in the same
51 manner.

52 (3) The fifth member shall be appointed by the senior judge in time of service of the
53 superior court of the county.

54 (4) The initial appointments to the board shall be made at least 30 days prior to July 1
55 of the odd-numbered year specified by the judge of the probate court in the notice
56 provided for in subsection (a) of this Code section. The initial members and their
57 successors shall be appointed for terms of four years and until their respective successors
58 are appointed and qualified. The term of each initial member shall commence on July 1
59 of such odd-numbered year.

60 (e) No person who holds elective public office shall be eligible to serve as a member of
61 the board during the term of such elective office, and the position of any member of the
62 board shall be deemed vacant upon such member's qualifying as a candidate for elective
63 public office.

64 (f) The governing authority shall certify the appointment of the members of the board
65 representing the political parties, and the senior judge of the superior court in time of
66 service shall certify his or her appointee by filing an affidavit with the clerk of the superior
67 court no later than 15 days preceding the date upon which such members are to take office,

68 stating the name and residential address of the person appointed and certifying that such
69 member has been duly appointed as provided in this Code section. The clerk of the
70 superior court shall record each of such certifications on the minutes of the superior court
71 and shall certify the name of each such appointed member to the Secretary of State and
72 provide for the issuance of appropriate commissions to the members within the same time
73 and in the same manner as provided by law for registrars.

74 (g) Each member of the board shall be eligible to serve successive terms, shall have the
75 right to resign at any time by giving written notice of such resignation to the appointing
76 body and to the clerk of the superior court, and shall be subject to removal from the board
77 by the appointing body at any time, for cause, after notice and hearing, in the same manner
78 and by the same authority as provided for the removal of registrars. For the purposes of
79 this subsection, the senior judge of the superior court in time of service shall be considered
80 the 'appointing body' for his or her appointee and the governing authority shall be
81 considered the 'appointing body' of the other members of the board.

82 (h) In the event a vacancy occurs in the office of any member before the expiration of his
83 or her term by removal, death, resignation, or otherwise, a successor shall be appointed to
84 serve the remainder of the unexpired term. Such appointment shall be made in the same
85 manner of appointment as provided for such position in subsection (c) of this Code section.
86 The clerk of the superior court shall be notified of such interim appointments and record
87 and certify such appointments in the same manner as the regular appointment of members.

88 (i) Before entering upon the member's duties, each member shall take substantially the
89 same oath as required by law for registrars and shall have the same privileges from arrest.

90 (j)(1) The board shall be authorized to organize itself, determine its procedural rules and
91 regulations, adopt bylaws, specify policies for the functions and duties of its employees
92 and poll workers, and otherwise take such action as is appropriate to the management of
93 the affairs committed to its supervision; provided, however, that no such action shall

94 conflict with law. Action and decision by the board shall be by a majority of the
95 members of the board.

96 (2) The board shall elect from among its members a chairperson and a vice chairperson.
97 The chairperson of the board shall preside over meetings of the board and, with the input
98 of the other members, establish the agenda for meetings. The vice chairperson shall act
99 in the absence or disability of the chairperson.

100 (3) The board shall be authorized to employ such full-time and part-time employees,
101 including poll workers, as may be deemed necessary by the board and as approved in the
102 annual budget adopted by the governing authority of the county.

103 (4) The board shall fix and establish, by appropriate resolution entered on its minutes,
104 directives governing the execution of matters within its jurisdiction. The board shall have
105 regular monthly meetings and shall meet not fewer than four times per year. Any
106 specially called meeting shall be called by the chairperson or any two members of the
107 board. The board shall maintain a written record of policy decisions amended to include
108 additions or deletions. Such written records shall be made available for the public to
109 review.

110 (5) The board shall develop and adopt annually a proposed budget for its operations to
111 be submitted to the county governing authority.

112 (6) The board shall have the authority to contract with any municipality located within
113 the county for the holding by the board of any primary or election to be conducted within
114 such municipality.

115 (7) Compensation for the members of the board, election supervisor, clerical assistants,
116 and other employees shall be fixed by the county governing authority. Such
117 compensation shall be paid wholly from county funds.

118 (k) The board shall be authorized to employ an election supervisor who shall generally
119 supervise, direct, and control the administration of the affairs of the board pursuant to law
120 and duly adopted resolutions of the board.

121 (l) The county governing authority shall provide the board with such proper and suitable
122 offices, equipment, materials, and supplies and with such clerical assistance and other
123 employees as the county governing authority shall deem appropriate.

124 (m) On July 1 of the odd-numbered year named in the notice provided pursuant to
125 subsection (a) of this Code section, the judge of the probate court shall be relieved of all
126 powers and duties to which the board succeeds by the provisions of this Code section and
127 shall deliver to the board all equipment, supplies, materials, books, papers, records, and
128 facilities pertaining to such powers and duties.

129 (n) The board created under this Code section may be replaced with a board created under
130 Code Section 21-2-40 or 21-2-45 by the passage of an appropriate local Act."

131 **SECTION 2.**

132 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.