

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE BILL NO. 424

BY REPRESENTATIVES MONTOUCET, BOBBY BADON, BALDONE, BARRAS, BISHOP, BROSSETT, CHAMPAGNE, CONNICK, CORTEZ, DIXON, DOERGE, DOVE, EDWARDS, ELLINGTON, GISCLAIR, GUILLORY, GUINN, HARDY, HARRISON, HENRY, HUVAL, SAM JONES, LANDRY, LEBAS, LEGER, LOPINTO, PONTI, RITCHIE, ROBIDEAUX, ST. GERMAIN, TEMPLET, AND TUCKER

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

STATE DEPARTMENTS: Provides for the La. French Language Services program

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 14 of Title 25 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised
3 of R.S. 25:671 through 674, to provide for the Louisiana French Language Services
4 Program; to provide for identification of employees in state departments who can
5 provide services in French or assist employees in providing services to French-
6 speaking persons; to provide for development and implementation of the program
7 by the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism in concert with the Council
8 for the Development of French in Louisiana; and to provide for related matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. Chapter 14 of Title 25 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950,
11 comprised of R.S. 25:671 through 674, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

12 CHAPTER 14. LOUISIANA FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES PROGRAM

13 §671. Legislative findings

14 The legislature finds that:

15 (1) The heritage of the French-speaking people of Louisiana is one of the
16 greatest treasures of Louisiana's rich cultural patrimony and perhaps the most
17 significant factor in making the state's culture unique.

1 (2) Louisiana has a quarter of a million French-speaking citizens and a
2 million residents of French-language heritage, and French-speaking visitors to
3 Louisiana spend roughly one hundred million dollars annually in the state.

4 (3) Commercial and industrial concerns based in France have made
5 investments of one billion eight hundred million dollars in the state and further
6 encouragement of such investment is in the interests of the state.

7 (4) Providing state government services in the French language would
8 encourage the preservation of the state's French cultural heritage for future
9 generations, would provide important and sometimes life-sustaining services to
10 French-speaking citizens and visitors, and would support and encourage French
11 investment in Louisiana, and therefore, would serve not only the state's French-
12 speaking citizens but the entire state.

13 §672. Louisiana French Language Services Program; purposes

14 The Louisiana French Language Services Program shall be established as
15 provided in this Chapter for the following purposes:

16 (1) To the extent practicable, to provide state government services to French-
17 speaking citizens and visitors in the French language.

18 (2) To assist Louisiana citizens who speak French in dealing with and
19 receiving services from state government so as to support the long-term
20 sustainability of Louisiana's historic French cultural heritage.

21 (3) To assist French-speaking visitors to the state and thus to promote an
22 increase in tourism and greater investment in the state from Francophone countries.

23 §673. Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism; program responsibilities;
24 cooperation of departments

25 A. The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, referred to in this
26 Chapter as the "department", in concert with and under the guidance of the Council
27 for the Development of French in Louisiana, shall develop and provide for
28 implementation of a program for provision of services of state government in the
29 French language.

1 B.(1)(a) In developing the program, the department shall work in
2 cooperation with departments of state government, and such departments shall
3 cooperate with the department.

4 (b) The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism shall also participate
5 in the program in the same manner as other departments.

6 (2) The department shall request each state department to identify its
7 employees who speak French with sufficient fluency to provide or assist others in
8 providing services of the department to French-speaking persons and shall assist the
9 departments in identifying such employees. The department shall request the
10 Council for the Development of French in Louisiana to assist the departments of
11 state government in identifying employees who speak French with necessary
12 fluency.

13 (3) The department shall develop guidelines for implementation of the
14 program. Such guidelines shall address such issues as priorities in implementing the
15 program in service areas with greater numbers of French-speaking citizens or visitors
16 and for services dealing with such matters as health, safety, compliance with
17 regulations, or complexity of processes. The implementation guidelines shall also
18 address dealing with limited department resources.

19 (4) The department shall provide for appropriate insignia, such as a badge
20 with the word "Bienvenue" or "Bonjour" to identify employees who will assist
21 French-speaking clients in accessing and using department services. The department
22 shall provide procedures for recognition of the employees entitled to wear such
23 insignia which may include recognition of the employee's language skills by the
24 Council for the Development of French in Louisiana.

25 C.(1) The department shall provide for implementation of the program by
26 state departments in accordance with the guidelines developed as provided in this
27 Section and subject to the resources available to individual departments.

28 (2) The department shall urge the convention and visitors bureaus throughout
29 the state to implement a similar program.

1 §674. Recommendations; award of excellence

2 A. The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism shall make
3 recommendations for improving the provision of French language services to state
4 departments, the governor, and the legislature.

5 B. The department may institute an annual "Sceau d'excellence" [Seal of
6 excellence] designation for the state department, agency, or office that best
7 accomplishes the program's purposes, giving consideration to public visibility and
8 recognition for the program within the department, agency, or office and the
9 proportion of employees who are participating.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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)