

**CHAPTER 43****( HB 393 )**

AN ACT relating to water district commissioners and declaring an emergency.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

→Section 1. KRS 74.020 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) A water district shall be administered by a board of commissioners which shall control and manage the affairs of the district. The term of each commissioner is four (4) years, except as provided in this section:
  - (a) If a district lies wholly within a single county, or operates as a single-county district, as provided in paragraph (c) of this subsection, the board of commissioners shall be composed of either three (3) or five (5) members as the county judge/executive shall determine. Members of the board shall be residents of the district, or of any incorporated or unincorporated area served by the district in the county in which the district was originally established, who shall be appointed by the county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court. Initial appointments shall be for terms of two (2), three (3), and four (4) years, as designated by the court;
  - (b) Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this subsection, if a district formed in a single county extends its area to include territory in one (1) or more adjacent counties, as provided by KRS 74.115, the board of commissioners shall be appointed by the appropriate county judges/executive, with the approval of the respective fiscal courts of the concerned counties as follows: in two (2) county districts, three (3) members from the original district and two (2) members from the extended portion of the district; for extensions into three (3) or more counties, the respective county judges/executive, with the approval of the respective fiscal courts, shall appoint, in addition to the existing membership of the commission, two (2) members from the original one-county district and two (2) members from the newly extended portion of the district. Orders establishing the extension shall provide for the staggering of initial terms in an equitable manner; and
  - (c) If a district acquires an existing water or gas distribution system serving an area which extends beyond the boundaries of the district into one (1) or more additional counties, or if a district extends its area to include territory in one (1) or more adjacent counties as provided by KRS 74.115, it may operate the distribution system so acquired, or extended, without adding additional board members, if the new area to be served shall be deemed to be a minor portion of the total area served by the district, and if the fiscal court of the county containing the minor portion of the total area shall have agreed to the acquisition or to the extension of the distribution system. If less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total assets of the distribution system are located within any particular county included in the territorial boundaries of the district, it shall be conclusively presumed, with respect to that particular county, that the district comes within the terms of this subsection.
- (2) A commissioner may be removed from office as provided by KRS 65.007 or 74.025.
- (3) A commissioner who participates in any official action by the water district board of commissioners which results in a direct financial benefit to him may be removed from office as provided by KRS 65.007 or 74.025.
- (4) Vacancies shall be filled by the same appointing authority which is empowered to make the original appointment. Vacancies resulting from cause other than expiration of the term shall be filled for the unexpired term only. Notwithstanding KRS 67.710, a vacancy resulting from the expiration of a term or the death, resignation, or removal of the incumbent shall be filled by the Public Service Commission if, within ninety (90) days following the vacancy, the vacancy has not been filled by the appropriate county judge/executive with approval of the fiscal court.
- (5) The commission shall elect a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, and any other officers and assistant officers as the commission may deem necessary, each of whom shall be members of the commission. Any two (2) or more offices may be held by the same person, except that the chairman may not hold any other office. Each commissioner shall execute a bond for the faithful performance of the duties of his position.
- (6) Each commissioner shall receive an annual salary of not more than thirty-six hundred dollars (\$3,600), which shall be paid out of the water district fund, except that beginning January 1, 1999, **and subject to subsection (9) of this section**, each commissioner who completes during an educational year a minimum of six (6)

instructional hours of water district management training approved by the Public Service Commission may receive an annual salary of not more than six thousand dollars (\$6,000) to be paid out of the water district fund. An educational year shall begin on January 1 and end on the following December 31. In the case of single-county districts, which shall be deemed to include districts described in paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of this section, the salary shall be fixed by the county judges/executive with the approval of the fiscal court; in multicounty districts, it shall be fixed by the agreement between the county judges/executive with the approval of their fiscal courts. In fixing and approving the salary of the commissioners, the county judge/executive and the fiscal court shall take into consideration the financial condition of the district and its ability to meet its obligations as they mature.

- (7) (a) ***Except as provided in subsection (9) of this section***, in order to receive an increase in salary as specified in subsection (6) of this section, commissioners shall successfully complete six (6) instructional hours of water district management training annually. The training shall be approved and paid for by the water district of the county the commissioner represents. Those commissioners not required to complete the six (6) instructional hours shall be reimbursed for the cost of instruction if they choose to complete the water district training.
- (b) The Public Service Commission shall be responsible for the regulation of all water district management training programs for commissioners of water districts, combined water, gas, or sewer districts, or water commissions.
- (c) The Public Service Commission shall encourage and promote the offering of high quality water district management training programs that enhance a water district commissioner's understanding of his or her responsibilities and duties. The commission shall, no later than January 1, 1999, establish standards and procedures to evaluate, accredit, and approve water district management training programs.
- (8) (a) At least once annually, the Public Service Commission shall provide or cause to be conducted a program of instruction, consisting of at least twelve (12) hours of instruction, that is intended to train newly appointed commissioners in the laws governing the management and operation of water districts and other subjects that the Public Service Commission deems appropriate. The commission may charge a reasonable registration fee to recover the cost of the programs and may accredit programs of instruction that are conducted by other persons or entities and that the commission deems equivalent to its program of instruction.
- (b) Within twelve (12) months of his or her initial appointment, each commissioner shall complete the program of instruction described in paragraph (a) of this subsection. ***Except as provided in subsection (9) of this section***, any commissioner who fails to complete the program within twelve (12) months of his or her initial appointment shall forfeit his or her office and all right to act in discharge of the duties of the office. A commissioner required to attend a program under this subsection shall be reimbursed for the cost of instruction by his or her water district.
- (9) ***The Public Service Commission may grant a reasonable extension of time, not to exceed six (6) months, for completing the training requirements of subsections (6), (7), and (8) of this section for good cause shown.***
- (10) (a) Within thirty (30) days of the occurrence of a vacancy on its board of commissioners resulting from the expiration of a term or the death, resignation, or removal of the incumbent, a water district shall notify in writing the Public Service Commission of the existence of the vacancy. The notice shall include the name of the commissioner who last held the position and the date on which the unexpired term will end.
- (b) Within thirty (30) days of the appointment of a commissioner and the appropriate fiscal court's approval of that appointment, a water district shall notify the Public Service Commission of the appointment. The notice shall include the appointed person's name and the date of the expiration of his or her term.
- ~~(11)~~(10) The Public Service Commission may promulgate administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A to implement the requirements of this section.

➔Section 2. KRS 74.363 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) Boards of commissioners of any two (2) or more water districts may by concurrent action and by approval of a majority of the membership of the board of each merge their districts into one (1).
- (2) The members of the boards of commissioners of the merged water districts shall serve as members of the board of commissioners of the resulting district, regardless of their normal term expiration, until one (1) year after approval of the merger by the Public Service Commission. Thereafter, the board shall be composed as follows:

- (a) If the boundaries of the resulting district lie wholly within a single county, the board of commissioners shall be composed of between three (3) and seven (7) members as agreed upon by the merged water districts in their merger documents; and
  - (b) If the boundaries of the resulting district lie within two (2) or more counties, the board of commissioners shall be composed of six (6) or more members as agreed upon by the merged water districts in their merger documents.
- (3) Each appointment to the board of commissioners of the resulting district shall be made by the appropriate county judge/executive with the approval of the fiscal court. Each member of the board shall be a resident of the county from which he or she is appointed. The initial terms of the board of commissioners after the merger shall be as follows: approximately one-third (1/3) of the commissioners shall be appointed for a term of two (2) years; approximately one-third (1/3) of the commissioners shall be appointed for a term of three (3) years; and the remaining commissioners shall be appointed for a term of four (4) years. Thereafter, all commissioners shall be appointed for a term of four (4) years. KRS 74.020(2) to ~~(11)(10)~~ shall apply to all commissioners and vacancies on the board of commissioners.
- (4) The resulting district shall have all the assets and legal liabilities of the water districts joining in the merger. The separate existences of the water districts joining in the merger, except the resulting district, shall cease, and the title to all real estate and other property owned by the water districts joining in the merger shall be vested in the resulting district without reversion or impairment. Bonded obligations of any district secured by the right to levy an assessment as provided by KRS 74.130 through 74.230 or secured by the revenue of the systems operated by the district shall continue to be retired or a sinking fund for such purpose created from the tax assessments or revenue from the system operated by the district from funds collected over the same area by the new board of commissioners in accordance with the laws under which the bonds were issued until all bonded obligations of the old district have been retired.

➔Section 3. Whereas the cancellation of training programs due to COVID-19 has made it difficult or impossible for many water district commissioners to comply with their statutory training requirements, and temporary waivers of those requirements by the Public Service Commission will be necessary, an emergency is declared to exist, and this Act takes effect upon its passage and approval by the Governor or upon its otherwise becoming law.

**Signed by Governor March 18, 2021.**