



Florida School Boards Association

The voice of education in Florida.

Proposal 32 – School Board Member Salaries FSBA Analysis and Key Concepts

Summary

This proposal revises Article IX, Sections 2, 4, and 7 of the Florida Constitution. The proposal would require that members of the state board of education, members of district school boards, members of state university boards of trustees, and members of the board of governors would serve without compensation. The proposal allows for members of these boards to be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses in accordance with state law.

Key Concepts and Concerns

Protect Diversity

- By creating an elected office for which only those who can afford to work for free, the proposal would jeopardize the ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity of school boards.
- School board members are elected by their constituents to represent the interests and diversity of the community. The members of the other boards are appointed to serve on that board and are not accountable to electors to represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity of the community.

Recognize Responsibilities

- Florida school board members are “constitutional officers” because the office of a school board member is established in the state constitution, rather than in state law.
- Florida’s school boards are independent local governments, without oversight by another municipal or county government, which carries with it increased levels of responsibility, authority, and liability for those school board members. This is not the case in most other states.
- Florida’s school boards have independent taxing authority, which carries with it increased levels of responsibility, authority, liability, and fiscal oversight for those school board members.
- The proposal overlooks the significantly larger scope of work of Florida school boards that oversee significantly larger school districts and significantly larger student populations.
 - Florida’s smallest school districts serve more students than the largest school districts in most other states.
 - After California and Texas, Florida has the 3rd largest public school system in the country serving more than 2,829,000 students in the 2017-2018 school year.
 - There are 358 elected school board members in Florida. In comparison with states with a larger student enrollment, California has more than 5,000 school board members and Texas has more than 7,000 school board members. In comparison with some of the states with a smaller student enrollment, Illinois has nearly 6,000 school board members, Georgia has 1,100, Oklahoma has 2,700, and Wisconsin has 2,787.
 - There are 67 school districts in Florida which geographically match with Florida’s 67 counties. In comparison, California has 945 school districts and Texas has 1,028 school districts. Illinois has 852 school districts, Georgia has 180, Oklahoma has 513, and Wisconsin has 422.

Maintain Fairness

- Though several boards are listed, this proposal would have effect only on school board members since none of the other groups listed currently receive a salary.
- Florida school board members are currently the lowest paid elected County Constitutional officers in each county, earning almost ½ the salary of elected County Commissioners in many counties. Typically, school boards oversee a substantially larger budget and larger staff than County Commissioners.
- If passed, school board members would become the only locally elected Constitutional Officer without a salary.

Additional Considerations

- The proposal does not address Article II, Section 5 of the Florida Constitution which allows for the compensation of county public officers – including school board members – to be established in law.
- As county elected public officers, all Florida school board members are bound by ethical standards and requirements set forth in Article II, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution and in the statutory Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees.
- The average salary of a school board member, at \$34,000, is far below that of the 2016-2017 average teacher salary of \$47,585.
- The potential negative implications of this proposal are compounded when viewed in the context of related proposals under consideration that would impose school board member term limits and would require all superintendents to be appointed by the school board.

Background Information

The practice of determining the compensation of Florida's county constitutional officers by state law was sanctioned by the Constitution of 1885 and has been maintained since the 1968 constitutional revision. The statutory salary provisions apply to all designated officers in all counties, except those officials whose salaries are not subject to being set by the Legislature due to the provisions of a county home rule charter, as well as those officials of counties that have a chartered consolidated form of government (Duval).

The authority, definitions, and methodology for the annual calculation of the salary of all constitutional officers, including school board members, is set forth in Chapter 145, F.S. Additional information that is specific to the calculation of school board member salaries is contained in Section 1001.395, F.S. The salary computation involves a number of factors set forth in statute including a base salary, population group number based on countywide population, applicable population ranges, group rates, and other factors certified by the Department of Management Services. The basic formula for the calculation is:

$$\begin{aligned} & [\text{base salary} + (\text{population over group minimum} \times \text{group rate})] \\ & \times \text{initial factor} \times \text{annual factor} \times \text{cumulative annual factor} = \text{salary} \end{aligned}$$

Although the salary of a school board member may not exceed the amount calculated by the formula, section 1001.395(2), F.S., authorizes a school board member to reduce his or her salary on a voluntary basis. In accordance with Attorney General Opinion 1979-87, the school board salary is effective on July 1 of each year.

According to the 2017-18 Salaries of Elected County Constitutional Officers and School District Officials, school board member salaries currently range from \$25,413 (Lafayette) to \$44,443 (Broward, Dade, Hillsborough, Orange and Palm Beach), with a statewide average salary of approximately \$34,000. Upon retirement, school board members are eligible for retirement benefits through the Florida Retirement System with an average benefit of about \$19,575 per retired school board member per year. In addition to salary and benefits, school board members receive reimbursement of travel expenses as authorized in s. 112.061, F.S.

Sources:

[Text of Proposal 32](#)

[CRC Proposal 32 Staff Analysis](#)

[EDR: Salaries of Elected County Constitutional Officers and School District Officials](#)

[Chapter 145, F.S.](#)

[Section 1001.395, F.S.](#)

[Attorney General Opinion 1979-87](#)

[FSBA Sample School Board Salary Calculation](#)

[Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the US](#)

[Characteristics of Public School Districts in the US](#)