

Constitution Revision Commission
P 33 – Requires all Superintendents to be Appointed
By Erica Donalds

Summary

P 33 amends Article IX, section 5, relating to school superintendents and requires all school superintendents to be appointed. The amendment would take effect November 17, 2020. Currently, the constitution requires that superintendents be elected or, when provided by resolution of the district school board, or by special law, approved by the voters, the superintendent may be appointed.

Talking Points

The Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) opposes P 33.

The current constitutional provision works. It is not broken.

The current constitutional provision retains the power of whether the superintendent of schools is elected or appointed in the hands of the people and the local community – where it belongs.

If this provision goes on the ballot, the citizens in the more populous areas of the state will be able to overrule those citizens in small and medium size districts.

The right to vote in one county is usurped by citizens in another county.

This proposal violates local control.

Currently there are 41 elected superintendents and 26 appointed superintendents.

- Most of the appointed superintendents are from large districts (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Hillsborough).
- Some districts with appointed superintendents are from medium to large districts (Brevard, Lake and Alachua).
- A few district with appointed superintendents are from small districts (Okeechobee, Flagler and Monroe).
- Elected superintendents are mostly from small/medium districts, but there are a few that are from larger districts (Pasco, Marion, and Escambia)
- Most elected superintendents are from small/rural districts (a total of 33 districts ranging from Martin County with almost 19,000 students to Jefferson with under 1,000 students).

Superintendents, whether elected or appointed come from a variety of backgrounds and experience including both education and business.

Whether a superintendent is elected or appointed is not a predictor or guarantee of significant student performance. There are “A” districts with both elected and appointed superintendents.

All superintendents are elected – some by the voters and others by a school board. In the 2016 election, 22 new superintendents were elected (4 in the primary and 18 in the general election). Clearly, the voters do a good job of electing or “appointing” a new superintendent if they are not happy with the previous superintendent.

The salaries of appointed superintendents are higher than elected superintendents. Consequently, costs will increase in districts that now have elected superintendents should P 33 ultimately be enacted. This provision will increase administrative costs in many districts that can least afford it.

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Additional Information

General Information

In most counties, the school board is the largest employer. The superintendent is the CEO of the school system. Administering a school district is a complex and challenging job. School superintendents oversee the welfare and education of the district's students. He or she is also responsible for overseeing extracurricular activities, transportation, food service, facilities, and emergency shelters, to name a few. In addition, the superintendent must develop and maintain relationships with other local leaders and elected officials.

Credentials - While critics say there are no credentials for an elected superintendent, some of the most successful superintendents have not come from the education ranks. Former Senate President Don Gaetz is one example. He was a school board member and then school superintendent in Okaloosa County. Kurt Browning, currently serving as the school superintendent in Pasco County, was a former supervisor of elections and Secretary of State in Florida. He is now in his second term. Other superintendents from the private sector have also serve as successful superintendents.

Some superintendents grew up in education.

- Barbara Jenkins in Orange County Public Schools.
- Alberto Carvalho in Miami-Dade Public Schools.
- Senator Bill Montford, a former superintendents of Leon County Public Schools.
- Dr. Joseph Joyner, recently retired from St. John's County Public Schools and now President of Flagler College.

Some think it is better that superintendents come from in-state. Florida is a diverse state and it may be better to have someone from Florida who understands Florida's education finance and accountability systems. This is not always the case. Robert Runcie from Broward and Robert Avossa from Palm Beach are two examples of superintendents who have experience in other states.

Academic Performance – The highest performing districts are administered by elected and appointed superintendents.

- "A" districts with appointed superintendents
 - Brevard
 - Collier
 - St. Johns
 - Sarasota
 - Seminole
- "A" districts with elected superintendents
 - Martin
 - Nassau

- Okaloosa
- Santa Rosa
- Wakulla

Term/Longevity – Elected superintendents serve a four-year term. However, there is significant turnover every election cycle. In 2016, a total of 22 superintendents were elected to his or her first term. One superintendent had served before, but not in the previous term (DeSoto).

Appointed superintendents serve at the pleasure of the school board. According to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), nationwide, the average term for superintendents is 7 years. It is closer to 3 years in high poverty or very urban/rural communities.

In Florida, the average tenure of appointed superintendents is 3.2 years. Currently, Alberto Carvalho with Miami-Dade Public Schools is the longest serving appointed superintendent; followed Dr. Kamela Patton from Collier County Public Schools and Ken Kenworthy from Okeechobee County Public Schools.

For elected superintendents, tenure is longer. Assuming all current superintendents serve through 2020, the average tenure is 7.1 years. The longest serving appointed superintendent is Rick Shirley from Sumter County Public Schools; followed by Carlton Faulk from Union County Public Schools and Sandra Himmel from Citrus County Public Schools.

All superintendents are elected; some serve four year terms and others face an election at every school board meeting.

Superintendent Elections – 2016 Summary Data:

All superintendent races are partisan (with the exception of Columbia County)

- 41 superintendent seats were up for election
- 110 candidates qualified for election to those 41 seats
- 12 superintendents did not seek re-election
- 9 incumbent superintendents faced no opposition at qualifying and were re-elected
- 4 incumbent superintendents were re-elected in the Primary Election
- 4 new superintendents were elected in the Primary Election
- 6 incumbent superintendents were defeated in the Primary Election
- 6 incumbent superintendents were re-elected in the General Election
- 18 new superintendents were elected in the General Election
- 4 incumbent superintendents were defeated in the General Election

Salaries – The salaries of appointed superintendents are generally higher than elected superintendents. Consequently, costs will increase in districts that now have elected superintendents should P 33 ultimately be enacted.

Florida has some of the largest school districts in the country. This is due, in large part, to the fact that school districts are county-wide in Florida and Florida has only 67 counties. For example, Miami-Dade has over 350,000 students, Broward has over 270,000 students and Palm Beach has over 190,000 students. The salaries of these superintendents reflect the size and student population of the district they serve and are between \$300,000 and \$345,000.

According to the *2016 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study*, the medium salary distributed by district enrollment ranges from just \$90,000 for the smallest districts to nearly \$230,000 for superintendents serving in school districts with 25,000 or more students. Below is a table reflecting salaries by district enrollment and gender of superintendent.

2016-2017 District Enrollment

2016/17 Base Salary	Less than 300 Students		300 to 2,499 Students		2,500 to 9,999 Students		10,000 to 24,999 Students		25,000 or more Students	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Minimum	56000	62500	57750	55865	98500	105000	129553	50000	133527	166762
Median	91000	90200	121996	121900	165000	161331	184975	198682	229000	225000
Maximum	177000	134450	276000	260000	320000	272000	279000	258358	393000	305000

Source: *2016 AASA Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study*

The salaries of elected superintendents are established in statute along with other local constitutional officers. The highest paid constitutional officer in each county is the Sheriff. The Clerk of Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections Tax Collector and School Superintendent make the same salary. The salary is calculated annually by the Office of Economic and Demographic Research and is based in part on the population of the county.

The salaries of Florida’s elected superintendents are significantly lower when compared to the median salaries of superintendents nationwide, almost all of whom are appointed. For example, Lafayette County has the lowest salary - \$97,459 with an enrollment of 1,216 students. Yet, the median salary for a district with a similar number of students nationwide is almost \$122,000 with a maximum of \$276,000. Pasco has the highest salary - \$150,344 with an enrollment of 73,181 students. Nationwide, superintendents with 25,000 or more students have a median income ranging from \$225,000-\$229,000 with a maximum ranging from \$305,000-\$393,000.

Elected and Appointed Superintendents by Student Population

Most of the appointed superintendents are from large districts.

- Miami-Dade – 352,444 students
- Broward – 272,511 students
- Hillsborough 213,534 students
- Orange 201,303 students
- Palm Beach - 192,148 students

- Duval 129,559 students
- Polk 101,593 students
- Pinellas 100,804 students

Some districts with appointed superintendents are from medium to large districts.

- Brevard 72,961 students
- Lake 42,040 students
- Alachua 28,862 students
- Osceola 64,570 students
- Collier 46,529 students

A few districts with appointed superintendents are from small districts.

- Flagler 12,953 students
- Monroe 8,191 students
- Okeechobee 6,523 students

Elected superintendents are mostly from small/medium districts, but there are a few that are from larger districts.

- Pasco 73,181 students
- Marion 42,808 students
- Escambia 39,627 students
- Clay 37,034 students
- Leon 33,873 students
- Okaloosa 31,231 students
- Santa Rosa 27,708 students
- Bay 27,669 students

Most elected superintendents are from small/rural districts.

- Martin 18,915 students
- Citrus 15,058 students
- Highlands 12,239 students
- Nassau 11,851 students
- Putnam 10,898 students
- Columbia 9,888 students
- Walton 9,249 students
- Sumter 8,417 students
- Hendry 7,373 students
- Jackson 6,383 students
- Suwannee 6,050 students
- Levy 5,398 students
- Hardee 5,266 students
- Wakulla 5,157 students

- Gadsden 5060 students
- DeSoto 4,933 students
- Baker 4,821 students
- Washington 3,270 students
- Bradford 3,127 students
- Holmes 3,090 students
- Madison 2,731 students
- Gilchrist 2,690 students
- Taylor 2,608 students
- Union 2,258 students
- Dixie 2,195 students
- Calhoun 2,154 students
- Gulf 1,922 students
- Hamilton 1,621 students
- Liberty 1,365 students
- Franklin 1,273 students
- Lafayette 1,216 students
- Glades 1,805 students
- Jefferson 689 students

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