

## House Bill No. 423

An act relating to the City of Pensacola; amending ch. 72-655, Laws of Florida; revising provisions relating to referendum elections for levy of ad valorem property tax for the Pensacola downtown area; amending downtown area boundaries; providing for abolishment of the Pensacola downtown improvement board; providing for eligibility of electors; deleting provisions relating to registration of electors; providing for election procedures and results; removing provisions relating to notification, additional registration, voting, and passage of and failure to approve the act; providing for an abolishment referendum; providing for transmittal of referendum results; providing for continued function; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 13 of chapter 72-655, Laws of Florida, is amended to read:

Section 13. Referendum.—~~The power of the board to call for a referendum election for the levy of an ad valorem tax in addition to the one (1) mill tax previously authorized pursuant to section 9 of this act, any changes of boundaries of the downtown area, and any abolishment of the Pensacola downtown improvement board shall be determined by referendum elections in accordance with the provisions of this section as follows: No powers shall be exercised by the board, nor shall any special taxing district be established, until such time as the qualified electors in the downtown area approve of this act in accordance with the referendum provisions provided as follows:~~

(1) ELECTION SUPERVISOR.—~~For the purposes of this section, referendum~~ the city clerk shall act as election supervisor and do all things necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

(2) ELECTORS.—~~Any elector who is the owner of a freehold not wholly exempt from taxation within the downtown area established pursuant to section 4 of this act shall be eligible to vote in any referendum election provided for in this act. The owner of such freeholds shall be determined by the city clerk from the most recent real property assessment roll prepared by the property appraiser pursuant to general law prior to the scheduled referendum election. However, the grantee by conveyance of a freehold in the downtown area subsequent to the most recent real property assessment roll may present evidence of such conveyance to the city clerk not later than 60 days prior to the date of a referendum election, whereupon the clerk, after verifying such conveyance, shall substitute the name of the grantee as an elector in place of the owner appearing on the real property assessment roll. No more than one (1) ballot per freehold shall be cast in any referendum election.~~ REGISTRATION.—~~Within forty-five (45) days from the date the city adopts the ordinance defining the downtown area, the clerk shall compile a list of the names and last known addresses of the qualified electors~~

~~in the downtown area from the tax assessment roll of the City of Pensacola applicable as of December 31 in the year immediately preceding the year in which the aforesaid ordinance was adopted and the same shall constitute the registration list for the purposes of the electors' referendum hereinunder except as hereinafter provided.~~

~~(3) ELECTION PROCEDURES AND RESULTS.—The board shall determine by rule procedures for notice of referendum elections, the time and duration of the referendum and balloting periods, and the form of the ballots. The outcome of any referendum shall be determined by the majority of votes cast by eligible electors casting mail ballots delivered by the board to electors. The city clerk shall determine and certify the results of the referendum to the city council.~~ NOTIFICATION.—Within the time period specified in subsection (2), the clerk shall notify each qualified elector of the general provisions of this act, including the taxing authority and powers of eminent domain, the dates of the upcoming referendum.

~~Notification hereinunder shall be by certified United States mail and in addition thereto by publication one (1) time in a newspaper of general circulation in Escambia County within the time period provided in subsection (2).~~

~~(4) ADDITIONAL REGISTRATION.—Any qualified elector whose name does not appear on the tax rolls may register with the city clerk at the city hall, Pensacola, or by mail in accordance with regulations promulgated by the clerk. The registration books shall remain open until seventy five (75) days after the passage of the ordinance defining the downtown area by the city council.~~

~~(5) VOTING.—~~

~~(a) Within fifteen (15) days after the closing of the registration list, the clerk shall send a ballot to each qualified elector at his last known mailing address by certified United States mail. The ballot shall include a description of the general provisions of this act. Ballots shall be returned to the city clerk by United States mail or personal delivery at city hall.~~

~~(b) All ballots received by the clerk within one hundred twenty (120) days after the passage of the ordinance defining the downtown area shall be tabulated by the clerk who shall certify the results thereof to the city council no later than five (5) days after the one hundred twenty (120) day period.~~

~~(c) Any person voting on behalf of himself or any corporation, trust, partnership, or estate, who has knowledge that he is not a qualified elector as defined by this act, is guilty of perjury and shall be prosecuted and, upon conviction, punished in accordance with the provisions of the laws of this state.~~

~~(6) PASSAGE OF THE ACT.—The qualified electors shall be deemed to have approved of the provisions of this act at such time as the clerk certifies to the city council that approval has been given by the qualified electors representing in excess of fifty percent (50%) of the assessed value of the property within the downtown area.~~

~~(7) FAILURE TO APPROVE ACT.—Should the electors fail to approve of the provisions of this act as provided herein, the city may call one (1) additional referendum by resolution to the city council at any time after one (1) year from the certification of the results of the previous referendum by the clerk. The additional referendum shall be held in accordance with the provisions of this section, except that all time periods will be computed from the date of the resolution calling for the referendum and not from the passage of the ordinance defining the downtown area. Should the electors fail to initially approve this act as provided herein after two (2) such referenda, all provisions of this act shall be null and void, and this act shall be repealed.~~

~~(4)(8) ADDITIONAL ELECTIONS FOR BOUNDARY CHANGES.—~~Additional elections called after increasing or decreasing the boundaries of the downtown area in accordance with section 4 of this act shall be held in accordance with the referendum provisions for initial approval of this act; provided however, that no provision of this act shall require the approval of electors in an area which has previously approved of the provisions of this act by any referendum held hereinunder.

~~(5)(9) ABOLISHMENT REPEAL REFERENDUM.—A repeal referendum election may be called by petition of electors representing at least twenty percent (20%) of the electors assessed value of the property in the downtown area, for the purpose of ceasing the activity of the district and seeking repeal of the act from the Legislature abolishing the board and repealing this act. Upon receipt of such a petition for an abolishment a repeal referendum by the city clerk, a referendum election shall be called by the city. The procedure shall be the same as provided for other referendum elections provided for in the initial approval of this act, except that if an abolishment referendum is defeated, then additional abolishment repeal referenda may be petitioned at any time after one (1) year from the certification of the results of a previous abolishment repeal referendum by the clerk. The proposition shall be put on a ballot permitting a vote for abolishment repeal of the Pensacola downtown improvement board or against abolishment repeal. If the abolishment referendum is approved, then the city clerk shall transmit the referendum results to the chair of the local legislative delegation within 30 days of the certification of the referendum results. Following certification of the referendum results, the Pensacola downtown improvement board shall continue to function until the act is repealed by the Legislature. A vote for repeal of the board by the electors representing more than fifty percent (50%) of the total qualified electors voting in the repeal referendum shall cause immediate cessation of the Pensacola downtown improvement board and shall constitute repeal of this act.~~

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 10, 2003.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 10, 2003.