

CHAPTER 2026-197

House Bill No. 4029

An act relating to the Hillsborough County Charter; revising the number of commissioners on the Board of County Commissioners of Hillsborough County; revising the territory of each county district; revising district reapportionment requirements; revising vote count requirements for enactment of ordinances and resolutions, county internal auditor appointments and removals, county administrator appointments and removals, county attorney appointments and removals, and charter amendments; revising the process for appointing the charter review board members and for proposing amendments to the charter; providing requirements for transitions to single-member districts and 11-member board of commissioners; requiring a referendum; providing effective dates.

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

Section 1. Sections 4.02, 4.03, 4.04, 4.05, 4.06, 4.08, 4.10, 5.03, 6.03, 8.01, 8.02, and 8.03 of the Hillsborough County Charter are amended, and sections 10.09 and 10.10 are added to the charter, to read:

[ARTICLE] IV. - LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Sec. 4.02. - Board of County Commissioners.

The board of county commissioners shall consist of 9 ~~seven~~ commissioners, each of whom shall be elected from one of nine ~~seven~~ districts, unless the county has a population of at least 2,500,000 based on the most recent decennial census, in which case the board of county commissioners shall consist of 11 members. and Each commissioner ~~of whom~~ shall be entitled to have other employment which does not prevent the member from having the time to discharge the duties of a commissioner. Prior to voting on any matter of county business, any commissioner having a conflict of interest shall declare that conflict to the board.

Sec. 4.03. - Districts.

~~The territory of three districts shall embrace the entire territory of the county and be designated as districts 5, 6 and 7 respectively.~~ The territory of each district ~~four districts~~ shall be established by dividing all of the county into four separate areas, designated numerically as districts 1 through 4 respectively, as nearly equal in population as practicable.

Sec. 4.04. - Residency requirement and limit on terms.

Each candidate for a seat on the board of county commissioners shall be a citizen of the United States of America, a registered voter of the district for which the candidate qualifies, and a resident of Hillsborough County. No

person who has, or but for resignation could have, served as a commission member ~~from districts 1 through 4~~ for more than six years in two consecutive terms shall be elected as commission member ~~from districts 1 through 4~~ for the next succeeding term, and no person who has, or but for resignation would have, served as a commission member ~~from districts 5 through 7~~ for more than six years in two consecutive terms shall be elected as commission member ~~from districts 5 through 7~~ for the next succeeding term.

Sec. 4.05. - Election and term of office.

Except as provided herein, all elections for the board of county commissioners shall be as provided for county commissioners in non-charter counties. Each commissioner shall be elected by the electors residing in the district for which the commissioner qualifies. Each commissioner shall be elected for a term of four years, except as provided for ~~initial commis-~~sioners in the transition article and except that, in order to reflect population shifts between decennial censuses as quickly as possible, in 2030 ~~1990~~ and every ten years thereafter the commissioners to be elected from odd-numbered ~~districts 1 and 3~~ shall be elected for terms of two years, and in 2032 ~~1992~~ and every ten years thereafter the commissioners to be elected from even-numbered ~~districts 2 and 4~~ shall be elected for terms of two years. Terms of office shall commence on the second Tuesday following the general election at which the commissioner was elected.

Sec. 4.06. - Reapportionment.

Within 120 days after the certification of the federal decennial census, the board of county commissioners shall reapportion the ~~districts 1 through 4~~. Before doing so, the board of county commissioners shall cause an accurate description of the proposed new boundaries of such districts to be entered upon its minutes and a certified copy thereof to be published once each week for four consecutive weeks (four publications being sufficient) in a newspaper of general circulation published in the county and via electronic media. The notice shall include the date of the meeting at which the board shall consider such boundaries and take testimony from the public regarding boundary changes. Proof of such publication shall be entered on the minutes of the board. The publication of the notice shall be for information only and shall not be jurisdictional. Should the board of county commissioners desire to make substantial changes to the proposed boundaries that were initially advertised and considered at the public meeting, the board of county commissioners shall hold an additional meeting to consider such new boundaries within 28 days of the first meeting and shall cause an accurate description of the new proposed districts to be advertised once each week for two weeks in a newspaper of general circulation and via electronic media. Whenever the boundaries of the existing districts are changed, the board shall cause its clerk to furnish the department of state with a certified copy of its minutes, reflecting the description of the boundaries of the district, as changed.

Sec. 4.08. - Enactment of ordinances and resolutions.

The commission may take official action only by the adoption of ordinances, resolutions, or motions. Unless otherwise provided herein, all ordinances, rules and resolutions shall be adopted by a vote of the majority of the entire membership of the board of county commissioners at least four (4) affirmative votes, and all motions shall be adopted by majority vote of the members present. A majority of the full commission shall constitute a quorum to conduct business.

Sec. 4.10. - County Internal Auditor.

1. To advise the board of county commissioners, assist the board of county commissioners in conducting continuing studies of the operation of county programs and services, there shall be a county internal auditor.

2. The county internal auditor shall be appointed by ~~five (5)~~ affirmative votes by a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership of the board of county commissioners. The board of county commissioners, at any time, may remove the county internal auditor with ~~five (5)~~ affirmative votes by a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership of the board of county commissioners. The county internal auditor shall be responsible directly to the board of county commissioners. The county internal auditor need not be a resident of Hillsborough County at the time of appointment, but shall become a resident of Hillsborough County within a reasonable period of time and remain a resident of Hillsborough County while in office.

3. The county internal auditor shall be a certified public accountant holding an active license to practice public accountancy in the State of Florida, and/or shall be qualified by education and experience in governmental accounting, internal auditing practice, and fiscal controls. The county internal auditor shall not engage in any other business or occupation. The compensation of the county internal auditor shall be fixed by the board of county commissioners at a level which is commensurate with the requirements of the position. The county internal auditor's compensation, including severance pay, may be set by contract.

4. The board of county commissioners shall biennially establish an audit committee of 3 to 5 members who shall be selected by the board of county commissioners from among qualified applicants from the public and who shall meet without compensation from time to time for the purpose of making internal audit program recommendations to the board of county commissioners. The board of county commissioners shall annually, after receiving recommendations from the audit committee, give direction to the county internal auditor. The Hillsborough County internal auditor's work may include audits of all aspects of this Charter Government and its offices and its officials with written audit reports submitted to both the board of county commissioners and the county administrator. To the extent it is reasonable, the County internal auditor's work shall comply with professional standards for internal auditing. To the degree necessary to fulfill the responsibilities directed by the board, the auditor shall have free and unrestricted access to Charter government employees, officials, records, and

reports and where appropriate, may require all divisions, offices, and officials of the Charter government to provide all oral and written reports and to produce documents, files and other records.

5. The county internal auditor shall hire, on either a full-time or part-time basis, and may remove assistants. The number and qualifications of assistants shall be provided by the board of county commissioners. The county internal auditor may also be authorized by the board of county commissioners to hire outside expertise as may be deemed necessary. The county internal auditor's budget shall be set by the board of county commissioners.

6. The office of county internal auditor shall be deemed vacant if the incumbent: takes up residence outside of Hillsborough County; dies; resigns; or is removed by ~~five (5)~~ affirmative votes of a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership of the board of county commissioners. A vacancy in the office of the county internal auditor shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

7. The county internal auditor shall not hold any political office nor take part in any political activity other than voting.

[ARTICLE] V. - EXECUTIVE BRANCH: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Sec. 5.03. - County Administrator; qualifications, appointment, compensation.

(1) The county administrator shall be a full-time officer who holds a masters degree in public administration, management, or related field and shall have three years of executive or management experience in public administration. The county administrator shall be appointed by an affirmative vote of not less than a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership ~~five members~~ of the board of county commissioners and may be removed at any time by an affirmative vote of not less than a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership ~~five members~~ of the board or upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the entire membership ~~four (4) members~~ at each of two (2) regular meetings not less than thirteen (13) days apart and no more than twenty-eight (28) days apart. The administrator need not be a resident of the county at the time of appointment, but shall within a reasonable time become and remain while in office a resident of the county. The county administrator shall not engage in any other business or occupation.

(2) The compensation of the administrator shall be fixed by the board of county commissioners by ordinance at a level which is commensurate with the requirements of the position. The county administrator's compensation, including severance pay, may be set by contract if allowed by and pursuant to ordinance.

(3) The office of county administrator shall be deemed vacant if the incumbent; takes up residence outside the county; is by death, illness, or other casualty unable to continue to perform the duties of his office; resigns; or is removed by the board of county commissioners in the manner prescribed in section 5.03(1). A vacancy in the office shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment. The board of county commissioners may appoint an interim administrator in the case of vacancy, temporary absence, or disability of the present administrator until a successor has been appointed and qualified or the administrator returns.

[ARTICLE] VI. - COUNTY ATTORNEY

Sec. 6.03. - County Attorney qualifications, appointment, compensation.

(1) The County Attorney shall be and remain a member of The Florida Bar and shall have had at least five (5) years experience in Local Government Law or equivalent and such other experience as determined by the Board. The County Attorney need not be a resident at the time of appointment but shall within a reasonable time become and remain a resident of the County and remain so while in office. The County Attorney shall be a full time employee of the County and shall not otherwise engage in the practice of law except as may be authorized by the Board. The County Attorney shall be appointed by an affirmative vote of not less than a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership ~~five (5) members~~ of the Board of County Commissioners and may be removed at any time by an affirmative vote of not less than a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership ~~five (5) members~~ of the Board or upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the Board ~~four (4) members~~ at each of two (2) regular meetings not less than thirteen (13) days apart and no more than twenty-eight (28) days apart.

(2) The compensation of the County Attorney, including severance pay and other benefits, shall be fixed by contract, ordinance or resolution as determined by the Board at a level commensurate with the requirements of the position.

(3) The Office of the County Attorney shall be deemed vacant if the incumbent is removed, resigns, moves his residence from the County or is, by death, illness or other casualty, unable to continue in office. In the case of temporary vacancy or absence or disability, until a successor has been appointed or the County Attorney returns, the Chief Assistant County Attorney or other Assistant Attorney designated by the County Attorney shall serve as the County Attorney upon approval of the Board.

[ARTICLE] VIII. - AMENDMENTS TO CHARTER

Sec. 8.01. - By the Board of County Commissioners.

The board of county commissioners may propose amendments to this Charter by ordinance approved by at least a majority plus one (1) of the entire membership ~~five (5) members~~.

Sec. 8.02. - Charter Review Board.

Within two years after the effective date of this Charter and every five years thereafter, the board of county commissioners shall appoint a charter review board consisting of two members appointed by each commissioner ~~fourteen (14) electors of the county~~. Each commissioner shall appoint two members of the charter review board who shall be electors of the county who are electors in that commissioner's district, and none of whom may be an elected official. Members of the charter review board shall serve for a term of one year without compensation. Such board shall be empowered to conduct a comprehensive study of any or all phases of county government. The board of county commissioners shall provide such professional, technical, and clerical assistance as may be reasonably required by the charter review board upon submission of an appropriately documented request by the charter review board. The charter review board shall, after two public hearings and upon approval of two-thirds of its members, file any proposed amendments to the Charter, if any, with the supervisor of elections who shall provide for a vote on it pursuant to Section 8.04.

Sec. 8.03. - Initiative.

The power to propose amendments to this Charter by initiative is vested in the people:

(1) The power may be invoked by filing with the supervisor of elections a petition containing a copy of the proposed Charter amendment. Each petition must be circulated in each ~~numbered~~ board district and must be signed by a number of electors in each of at least one-half of the ~~districts 1 through 4~~ and of the county as a whole equal to eight percent of the votes cast in each of such districts and the county as a whole in the last preceding election in which a president or presidential electors were chosen. The address of each signer, and date of each signature, must appear on the petition. Each petition shall embrace but one subject and matter properly connected therewith. A date certain must be designated to and certified by the supervisor of elections as the beginning date of any petition drive, and said drive shall terminate six months after that date. In the event sufficient signatures are not acquired during that six-month period, the petition drive shall be rendered null and void and none of the signatures may be carried over onto another identical or similar petition.

(2) The petition shall be filed with the supervisor of elections who shall, within a period of not more than thirty (30) days, determine whether the petition contains the required valid signatures. The supervisor shall be paid the sum specified by general law by the persons or committee seeking verification.

(a) If it is determined that the petition does not contain the required signatures, the supervisor shall so certify to the board of county commissioners and the petition drive shall be at an end. No additional names may be added to the petition, and the petition shall not be used in any other proceeding.

(b) If it is determined that the petition has the required signatures, the supervisor shall so certify to the board of county commissioners and place the amendment on the ballot.

(3) All other procedures shall be as provided by general law for constitutional amendments with the supervisor of elections performing the duties of the secretary of state.

[ARTICLE] X. – TRANSITION AND SCHEDULE

Sec. 10.09 – Transition to Single-Member Districts.

By October 1, 2027, the board of county commissioners shall establish the apportionment of single-member districts under the procedures provided in section 4.06 using the most recent decennial census population figures. At the 2028 general election, commissioners elected from odd-numbered districts shall be elected for a term of two years, and commissioners elected from even-numbered districts shall be elected to a term of four years to maintain a system of staggered terms.

Sec. 10.10 – Transition to 11-Member Board of County Commissioners.

Within 120 days after the certification of a federal decennial census which determines the county has a population of at least 2,500,000, the board of county commissioners shall establish the reapportionment of single-member districts under the procedures provided in section 4.06 using the most recent decennial census population figures. At the first general election following the certification of such federal decennial census, commissioners elected from odd-numbered districts shall be elected for a term of two years, and commissioners elected from even-numbered districts shall be elected to a term of four years to maintain a system of staggered terms.

Section 2. Referendum election.—

(1) The referendum election called for by this act shall be held on November 3, 2026, the 2026 general election.

(2) The ballot title for the referendum question shall be in substantially the following form:

AMENDING THE COUNTY CHARTER TO INCREASE NUMBER OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, ALL ELECTED FROM SINGLE-MEM-
BER DISTRICTS.

(3) The referendum question shall be placed on the ballot in substantially the following form:

Shall the Hillsborough County Charter be amended to increase the number of members of board of county commissioners from 7 to 9 members, with an increase to 11 members once the county has a population of at least 2,500,000, require all county commissioners to be elected to office from single-member districts by electors residing in each of those districts only?

() YES.

() NO.

(4) In the event this question is answered affirmatively by a majority of the qualified electors voting in the referendum, the charter amendment will take effect. The referendum election shall be conducted by the Supervisor of Elections of Hillsborough County in accordance with the Florida Election Code.

Section 3. This act shall take effect upon its approval by a majority vote of the qualified electors of Hillsborough County voting in a referendum conducted in accordance with the provisions of law relating to elections currently in force, except this section and section 2 shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 8, 2026.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 8, 2026.