

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES LOCAL BILL STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1561 North Lauderdale Water Control District
SPONSOR(S): Gottlieb
TIED BILLS: None. **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** None.

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) <u>Local Affairs (Sub)</u>	<u>7 Y, 0 N</u>	<u>Smith-Boggis</u>	<u>Highsmith-Smith</u>
2) <u>Local Government & Veterans' Affairs</u>	_____	_____	_____
3) <u>Judiciary</u>	_____	_____	_____
4) _____	_____	_____	_____
5) _____	_____	_____	_____

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

This bill codifies all prior special acts relating to the North Lauderdale Water Control District, a dependent special district in Broward County into a single act and repeals all prior special acts relating to the District's charter.

This bill amends the charter to add a new provision that the District may borrow money at a rate not to exceed that which is provided by law. This bill adds a new provision that the interest rate on bonds and anticipated notes issued by the board not exceed the maximum rate allowed by law. This bill does not change the authority of the board to levy and assess ad valorem taxes and non-ad valorem assessments pursuant to chapter 298, F.S. The tax shall be assessed, levied and collected in the manner and at the same time as county taxes.

No fiscal impacts are anticipated for either fiscal year 2003-04 or 2004-05 according to the Economic Impact Statement.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. DOES THE BILL:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Reduce government? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Lower taxes? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Expand individual freedom? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Increase personal responsibility? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Empower families? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a “no” above, please explain:

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill amends the charter to add a new provision that the District may borrow money at a rate not to exceed that which is provided by law. This bill adds a new provision that the interest rate on bonds and anticipated notes issued by the board not exceed the maximum rate allowed by law. This bill does not change the authority of the board to levy and assess ad valorem taxes and non-ad valorem assessments pursuant to chapter 298, F.S. The tax shall be assessed, levied and collected in the manner and at the same time as county taxes.

This bill is amended to provide that the District may borrow money at a rate not to exceed that which is provided by law. This bill is amended to reflect that the members of the board of supervisors shall be the “city commission”, rather than the “city council” of the City of North Lauderdale. The provision is also amended regarding the meeting notice requirements to clarify that meetings be held at a public place. This bill is amended to reimburse supervisors for travel expenses pursuant to s. 112.061, F.S. This bill amends the interest rate on bonds issued by the board not exceed the maximum rate allowed by law. This bill amends the interest rates on tax anticipation notes issued by the board shall not exceed the maximum rate allowed by law. This bill deletes section 16 of chapter 63-661, L.O.F., relating to ‘the payment of taxes in advance not authorized’.

The North Lauderdale Water Control District, a dependent special district, was created by chapter 63-661, Laws of Florida.

History of Water Control Districts

Water control districts have a long history in Florida. As early as the 1830s, the Legislature passed a special act authorizing landowners to construct drainage ditches across adjacent lands to discharge excess water. Following the passage of several special acts creating drainage districts, the Legislature passed the state’s first general drainage law, the General Drainage Act of 1913, to establish one procedure for creating drainage districts – through circuit court decree – and to provide general law provisions governing the operation of these districts.

Between 1913 and 1972, the General Drainage Act remained virtually unchanged. In 1972 and 1979, the Legislature amended the act to change the name of these districts to water management districts and then to water control districts. In neither year did the Legislature enact a major reform of the act, although the 1979 act did repeal provisions authorizing the creation of water control districts by circuit court decree.

Chapter 298, Florida Statutes

Chapter 298, Florida Statutes, contains provisions governing the creation and operation of water control districts. Some of these provisions are briefly described below.

Creation of Water Control Districts

Section 298.01, Florida Statutes, restricts the creation of new water control districts to special acts of the Legislature (independent water control districts) and under the provisions of section 125.01, Florida Statutes (dependent water control districts). Districts created by circuit court decree prior to July 1, 1980, are authorized to operate under the authority provided by chapter 298, Florida Statutes.

Election of Board of Supervisors

Upon the formation of a water control district, the circuit court where the majority of the land is located has jurisdiction within the boundaries of the district. Once a district is organized, notice of the first landowners' meeting shall be given. The notice shall be published once a week for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper. At the first meeting, the landowners are required to elect a three-member board of supervisors. Supervisors serve 3-year rotating terms, with one supervisor elected each year at a required annual meeting. To qualify as a supervisor, a person must own property in the district and be a resident of the county in which the district is located, unless a district's special act provides otherwise. The Department of Environmental Protection is authorized to vote on any matter that may come before a landowners' meeting if acreage owned by the state is subject to assessment by the district.

One-Acre, One-Vote

Section 298.11(2), Florida Statutes, provides that every acre of assessable land within a district represents one share, or vote. Each landowner within a district is entitled to one vote per acre of assessable land that he or she owns. Landowners owning less than one acre are entitled to one vote. The section allows proxy voting by landowners as well. Landowners owning more than one acre are entitled to one additional vote for any fraction of an acre greater than 1/2 acre, when all of the landowners' acreage has been aggregated for purposes of voting.

Role of the Circuit Courts

Prior to July 1, 1980, when a water control district was formed, the circuit court of the county where the majority of the land is located had exclusive jurisdiction within the boundaries of the district. Circuit courts served several functions in the creation and governance of water control districts. After a board of supervisors adopted a plan of reclamation, it petitioned the circuit court to appoint three commissioners to appraise the lands that would be acquired to implement the plan of reclamation. A circuit court may have required the report on assessment of benefits and damages to be amended to include condemned lands needed to construct the district's works. In the event a circuit court determined that the value of land within the district had changed and additional conditions were met, the court was required to appoint three commissioners to readjust the original report on the assessments of benefits and damages.

Water Control Plans

Effective October 1998, any plan of reclamation, water management plan, or plan of improvement developed and implemented by a water control district is considered a "water control plan". The approval and implementation process has been removed from the purview of the circuit court.

Before adopting a water control plan or plan amendment, the board of supervisors must adopt a resolution to consider adoption of the plan or plan amendment. The board of supervisors shall publish notice of a public hearing once a week for 3 consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation.

Individual notices are mailed to landowners, the jurisdictional water management district, the county commission of the county and any municipality in which the District is located.

At the public hearing on the proposed plan or plan amendment the board of supervisors will consider any objections to the plan and then shall determine whether or not to proceed with the plan. In the event the board proceeds forward, it will then direct the District Engineer to prepare a report in writing to the board of supervisors complete with maps and surveys. The report shall include a full and complete water control plan for draining and reclaiming the lands described in the petition. Further, the report must contain an estimate of the costs of carrying out the completing the water control plan and an estimate of the benefits derived from the water control plan.

A final hearing on approval of the water control plan and the engineer's report, is noticed by publication, and held at a regularly scheduled board of supervisors' meeting within 60 days after the filing of the engineer's report with the secretary of the district.

Before final adoption of the engineer's report and water control plan or plan amendment under section 298.301, Florida Statutes, the board of supervisors must determine that the estimated costs of construction contemplated in the plan or amendment is less than the benefits determined for the lands.

The board of supervisors must review the water control plan at least every 5 years following its adoption.

Revenue Sources

The primary funding source for water control district activities is special assessments, which must be imposed on the property so that the burden on every parcel will bear a just proportion to that imposed on every other. In other words, the assessment of the particular parcel must represent a fair, proportional part of the total cost and maintenance of the improvement. Special assessments are limited to the property benefited and are not taxes within the meaning of the general constitutional requirement that taxation be imposed at a uniform rate. Special assessments may be determined legislatively or judicially.

A board of supervisors is authorized to issue bonds, not to exceed 90 percent of the total amount of special assessments levied.

Limitation on Special Acts

Section 11(a)(21), Article III of the State Constitution, provides that no special law or general law of local application shall be enacted that pertains to any subject prohibited by a general law passed by a three-fifths vote of the membership of each house. However, such a general law may be amended or repealed by like vote.

Section 298.76, Florida Statutes, is an example of such a general law passed by a three-fifths vote of the membership of each house. The statute provides that there shall be no special law or general law of local application granting additional authority, powers, rights, or privileges to any water control district formed pursuant to chapter 298, Florida Statutes. Section 298.76 Florida Statutes, does not prohibit special or local legislation that:

- (a) Amends an existing special act that provides for the levy of an annual maintenance tax of a district;
- (b) Extends the corporate life of a district;
- (c) Consolidates adjacent districts; or
- (d) Authorizes the construction or maintenance of roads for agricultural purposes as outlined in this chapter.

Section 298.76 Florida Statutes, authorizes special or local legislation:

- (a) Changing the method of voting for a board of supervisors for any water control district;
- (b) Providing a change in the term of office of the board of supervisors and changing the qualifications of the board of supervisors of any water control district; and
- (c) Changing the governing authority or governing board of any water control district.

Finally, section 298.76, Florida Statutes, provides that any special or local laws enacted by the Legislature pertaining to any water control district shall prevail as to that district and shall have the same force and effect as though it had been a part of chapter 298, Florida Statutes, at the time the district was created and organized.

Codification

Codification is the process of bringing a special act up-to-date. After a special district is created, special acts often amend or alter the special district's charter provisions. To ascertain the current status of a special district's charter, it is necessary to research all amendments or changes made to the charter since its inception or original passage by the Legislature. Codification of special district charters is important because it allows readers to more easily determine the current charter of a district.

Codification of special district charters was initially authorized by the 1997 Legislature and is codified in section 189.429, F.S. and s. 191.015, F.S. The 1998 Legislature subsequently amended both sections of statute. Current law provides for codification of all special district charters by December 1, 2004. The 1998 law allows for the adoption of the codification schedule provided for in an October 3, 1997, memorandum issued by the Chair of the Committee on Community Affairs. Any codified act relating to a special district must provide for the repeal of all prior special acts of the Legislature relating to the district. Additionally, the 2001 Legislature amended section 189.429, Florida Statutes to provide that reenactment of existing law pursuant to section 189.429: (1) shall not be construed to grant additional authority nor to supercede the authority of an entity; (2) shall continue the application of exceptions to law contained in special acts reenacted pursuant to the section; (3) shall not be construed to modify, amend, or alter any covenants, contracts, or other obligations of any district with respect to bonded indebtedness; and (4) shall not be construed to affect a district's ability to levy and collect taxes, assessments, fees, or charges for the purpose of redeeming or servicing the district's bonded indebtedness.

Since the enactment of sections 189.429 and 191.015, F.S., 122 special districts have codified their charters.

Status Statement Language

Section 189.404(5), F.S., provides that after October 1, 1997, the charter of any newly created special district shall contain and, as practical, the charter of a preexisting special district shall be amended to contain, a reference to the status of the special district as dependent or independent. When necessary, the status statement shall be amended to conform to the Department of Community Affairs's determination or declaratory statement regarding the status of the district.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Provides that this act is the District's charter codification required under section 189.429, Florida Statutes; provides Legislative intent; preserves all District authority.

Section 2. Codifies, reenacts, amends, and repeals chapters 63-661, 82-273, 85-385, 94-428, and 97-370, Laws of Florida.

Section 3. Re-creates and reenacts the North Lauderdale Water Control District charter as follows:

- Section 1. Creates the District; describes the District's boundaries.
- Section 2. Provides for applicability of certain provisions of chapter 298, Florida Statutes, to the District; provides provisions of chapter 298, Florida Statutes, not applicable to the District.
- Section 3. Provides for the powers of the District.
- Section 4. Provides the board of the district be the governing body of the district; provides for a five member governing board, composed of the City Commission of the City of North Lauderdale; provides term limits that are coincidental with that member's term of office; provides for annual meetings.
- Section 5. Provides for special meetings; provides for notice, with exception; provides for not less than four meetings annually.
- Section 6. Provides for compensation of the board.
- Section 7. Provides for the levy, apportionment, and collection of ad valorem taxation, and non-ad valorem assessments.
- Section 8. Provides for a maintenance tax.
- Section 9. Provides for the levy and assessment of all taxes on fractional acres.
- Section 10. Provides for the collection and enforcement of all taxes and assessments.
- Section 11. Provides for penalties when unpaid tax is delinquent.
- Section 12. Provides for the issuance of bonds; provides for the sale and disposition of proceeds; provides for interest; provides the duties of the treasurer in regards to bonds.
- Section 13. Authorizes full authority for issuance and sale of bonds.
- Section 14. Authorizes the issuance of tax anticipation notes.
- Section 15. Authorizes the right of eminent domain by the District.
- Section 16. Declares that the water in the District is a common enemy.
- Section 17. Provides for unit development; provides for powers of supervisors to designate units of District and adopt system of progressive drainage by units; provides for plans of reclamation and financing assessments for each unit.
- Section 18. Provides for severability of the provisions of the act.
- Section 19. Provides that the act shall take precedence over any conflict law to the extent of such conflict.
- Section 20. Approves the manner of giving notice of intention to apply for this legislation.
- Section 4.** Repeals chapters 63-661, 82-273, 85-385, 94-428, and 97-370, Laws of Florida.
- Section 5.** Provides that the act shall take effect upon becoming law.

II. NOTICE/REFERENDUM AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. NOTICE PUBLISHED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN? January 29, 2003

WHERE? Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, Boca Raton, Palm Beach County, Miami, Miami Dade County, Florida

B. REFERENDUM(S) REQUIRED? Yes No

IF YES, WHEN?

C. LOCAL BILL CERTIFICATION FILED? Yes, attached No

D. ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT FILED? Yes, attached No

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES: Not Applicable.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY: Not Applicable.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Supremacy Clause

Many local bills contain language providing that in the event of a conflict of the provisions of the local bill with the provisions of any other general or local law, the provisions of the act being considered controls to the extent of the conflict(s). This is referred to as a "supremacy" clause. This language does not allow interested persons or Members of the Legislature knowledge of the specific laws containing potential conflicts. Unless those specific laws in conflict are identified, it is suggested that the "supremacy" clause be removed from the bill.

IV. AMENDMENT/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

The sponsor of the bill offered one amendment. The amendment removes section 19 of the charter, the supremacy clause. The Subcommittee on Local Affairs recommended the amendment on April 2, 2003.