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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to soil and water conservation  
3           districts; amending s. 582.15, F.S.; providing for the  
4           subdivision of certain proposed soil and water  
5           conservation districts; requiring the Department of  
6           Agriculture and Consumer Services to subdivide certain  
7           proposed soil and water conservation districts;  
8           amending s. 582.18, F.S.; requiring the supervisors of  
9           each soil and water conservation district to be  
10          elected from each of the district's subdivisions;  
11          providing for the initial terms of office of  
12          candidates elected in each district subdivision;  
13          amending s. 582.19, F.S.; providing qualification  
14          requirements for supervisors to serve on the governing  
15          body of a soil and water conservation district;  
16          requiring candidates to submit a specified affirmation  
17          at the time of qualifying; creating s. 582.195, F.S.;  
18          requiring mandatory public meetings at least annually  
19          for the supervisors of soil and water conservation  
20          districts; creating s. 582.295, F.S.; providing for  
21          the automatic dissolution of soil and water  
22          conservation districts under certain conditions;  
23          providing for the transfer of the assets and  
24          liabilities of such districts to the department;  
25          exempting automatic dissolutions from specified  
26          provisions; dissolving the Baker Soil and Water  
27          Conservation District and the Martin Soil and Water  
28          Conservation District; transferring the assets and  
29          liabilities of those districts to the department;

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30 requiring all supervisors of soil and water  
31 conservation district governing bodies to be elected  
32 at the 2022 general election; specifying that  
33 subsequent elections will be held according to certain  
34 provisions; providing for the subdivision of certain  
35 soil and water conservation districts by a specified  
36 date; requiring the department to subdivide certain  
37 soil and water conservation districts by a specified  
38 date; providing transitional provisions regarding the  
39 implementation of newly subdivided districts and the  
40 election of supervisors; providing an effective date.

41  
42 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

43  
44 Section 1. Subsection (4) is added to section 582.15,  
45 Florida Statutes, to read:

46 582.15 Organization of district, etc.—

47 (4) After the Department of Agriculture and Consumer  
48 Services has determined that operation of a proposed district is  
49 administratively practicable and feasible and that the district  
50 boundaries are wholly located in one county, the district must  
51 be subdivided into five numbered subdivisions that match, as  
52 practicable, the boundaries of either the five county commission  
53 districts or five school board districts within the county. When  
54 neither the county commission nor the school board is subdivided  
55 into five districts, or when the district is comprised of  
56 multiple counties, the department shall subdivide the district  
57 into five numbered subdivisions as nearly equal in area as  
58 practicable to ensure geographical representation within that

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59 soil and water conservation district's governing body.

60 Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 582.18, Florida  
61 Statutes, is amended to read:

62 582.18 Election of supervisors of each district.—

63 (1) The election of supervisors for each soil and water  
64 conservation district shall be held every 2 years, with one  
65 supervisor elected from each of the five numbered subdivisions  
66 created by the department pursuant to s. 582.15(4). The  
67 elections shall be held at the time of the general election  
68 provided for by s. 100.041. The office of the supervisor of a  
69 soil and water conservation district is a nonpartisan office,  
70 and candidates for such office are prohibited from campaigning  
71 or qualifying for election based on party affiliation.

72 (a) Each candidate for supervisor for such district must  
73 ~~shall~~ qualify as directed by chapter 99.

74 (b) Each nominee who collects or expends campaign  
75 contributions shall conduct her or his campaign for supervisor  
76 of a soil and water conservation district in accordance with the  
77 provisions of chapter 106. Candidates who neither receive  
78 contributions nor make expenditures, other than expenditures for  
79 verification of signatures on petitions, are exempt from the  
80 provisions of chapter 106 requiring establishment of bank  
81 accounts and appointment of a campaign treasurer, but shall file  
82 periodic reports as required by s. 106.07.

83 (c) The names of all nominees on behalf of whom such  
84 nominating petitions have been filed shall appear upon ballots  
85 in accordance with the general election laws. All qualified  
86 electors residing within the district shall be eligible to vote  
87 in such election. The candidates who receive the largest number

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88 of the votes cast from each group of candidates in such election  
89 shall be the elected supervisors from such group for such  
90 district. In the case of a newly created district participating  
91 in a regular election for the first time, ~~three groups of~~  
92 candidates shall be elected from district subdivisions 1, 3, and  
93 5 for terms of 4 years, and candidates ~~two groups~~ shall be  
94 elected from district subdivisions 2 and 4 for initial terms of  
95 2 years. Each candidate elected shall assume office on the first  
96 Tuesday after the first Monday in January following the  
97 election.

98 Section 3. Subsection (1) of section 582.19, Florida  
99 Statutes, is amended to read:

100 582.19 Qualifications and tenure of supervisors.—

101 (1) The governing body of the district shall consist of  
102 five supervisors, elected as provided in s. 582.18 hereinabove.

103 (a) To qualify to serve on the governing body of a  
104 district, a supervisor must be an eligible voter who resides in  
105 the district and who:

106 1. Is actively engaged in, or retired after 10 years of  
107 being engaged in, agriculture as defined in s. 570.02;

108 2. Is employed by an agricultural producer; or

109 3. Owns, leases, or is actively employed on land classified  
110 as agricultural under s. 193.461.

111 (b) At the time of qualifying, a candidate for supervisor  
112 shall submit an affirmation in substantially the following form:

113  
114 State of Florida

115 County of ....

116

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117 Statement of Candidate for Supervisor of Soil and Water  
118 Conservation District

119  
120 I, ... (Name of candidate) ..., a candidate for Supervisor of  
121 Soil and Water Conservation District, meet the qualifications  
122 pursuant to s. 582.19(1), Florida Statutes, to serve on the  
123 governing body of the Soil and Water Conservation District.

124 ... (Signature of candidate) ...

125 ... (Address) ...

126  
127 Sworn to and subscribed before me this .... day of  
128 ....., ... (year) ....., at .... County, Florida.

129 Section 4. Section 582.195, Florida Statutes, is created to  
130 read:

131 582.195 Mandatory meeting of supervisors.-All five  
132 supervisors of the governing body of each district shall meet at  
133 least once per calendar year in a public meeting pursuant to s.  
134 286.011.

135 Section 5. Section 582.295, Florida Statutes, is created to  
136 read:

137 582.295 Automatic dissolution of districts.-

138 (1) If the governing body of a district fails to meet as  
139 required under s. 582.195, the district shall be automatically  
140 dissolved as of January 1 of the year immediately following the  
141 year in which the governing body failed to meet. All assets and  
142 liabilities of the district shall be transferred to the  
143 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

144 (2) Sections 189.076, 582.30, 582.31, and 582.32 do not  
145 apply to dissolution of a district under this section.

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146        Section 6. The Department of Economic Opportunity declared  
147 the Baker Soil and Water Conservation District inactive on  
148 August 3, 2020, and the Martin Soil and Water Conservation  
149 District inactive on March 17, 2020; therefore, the districts  
150 are hereby dissolved and all assets and liabilities of the  
151 districts are transferred to the Department of Agriculture and  
152 Consumer Services.

153        Section 7. (1) Each supervisor for a soil and water  
154 conservation district governing body shall be elected at the  
155 2022 general election. After the 2022 general election,  
156 candidates shall be elected pursuant to s. 582.18(1)(c), Florida  
157 Statutes, as amended by this act, and subsection (3).

158        (2) By January 1, 2023, a district in existence on July 1,  
159 2022, which was not subdivided in its initial creation pursuant  
160 to chapter 582, Florida Statutes, and whose district boundaries  
161 are wholly located in one county must be subdivided into five  
162 numbered subdivisions that match, as practicable, the boundaries  
163 of either the five county commission districts or five school  
164 board districts in the county. When neither the county  
165 commission nor the school board is subdivided into five  
166 districts, or when the district is comprised of multiple  
167 counties, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
168 shall subdivide the district into five numbered subdivisions as  
169 nearly equal in area as practicable to ensure geographical  
170 representation within that soil and water conservation  
171 district's governing body.

172        (3) The following procedures apply to the election of  
173 supervisors of soil and water conservation districts subdivided  
174 by the department pursuant to subsection (2):

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175 (a) District governing body seats 1, 3, and 5, which have  
176 terms that initially expired in January 2025 or 2027, as  
177 applicable depending on the year in which the district was  
178 formed, shall represent district subdivisions 1, 3, and 5,  
179 respectively. Such seats shall be filled for a term of 4 years.

180 (b) District governing body seats 2 and 4, which have terms  
181 that initially expired in January 2025 or 2027, as applicable  
182 depending on the year in which the district was formed, shall  
183 represent district subdivisions 2 and 4, respectively. Such  
184 seats shall initially be filled for a term of 2 years in order  
185 to achieve staggered terms; thereafter, any such seats shall be  
186 filled for a term of 4 years as provided under s. 582.19,  
187 Florida Statutes.

188 Section 8. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.