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## DIGEST

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HB 717 Original

2024 Regular Session

Domangue

**Abstract:** Provides relative to the Louisiana French Commerce Act.

Present law requires that documents must be in English.

Present law further requires that the corporate name does not need to be in English if it is written in English letters or Arabic or Roman numerals, and the certificate of existence required of foreign corporations do not need to be in English if accompanied by a reasonably authenticated English translation.

Proposed law adds that the corporate name may include English letters with special characters present in the French language. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides for the legislative findings of Louisiana's French enriched culture and the need to preserve that culture.

Proposed law adds an additional legislative finding that Louisiana is home to thousands of French speaking professionals, including French immersion graduates, who are qualified and capable to work for state government and government contractors in roles requiring French language skills. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides for the Louisiana French Language Services Program and the purposes it was established.

Proposed law adds an additional purpose for the program to create job opportunities for La. residents who speak French. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Present law provides for the responsibilities and duties of the Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

Proposed law retain present law provides for the following additional responsibilities and duties for state agencies and contractors and the department:

- (1) All state agencies and contractors shall be charged with hiring Louisiana residents who speak French in roles where French language skills are necessary or helpful to the fulfillment of job responsibilities.

- (2) The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism shall hire at least one French speaking employee who is a Louisiana resident in each of the visitors' centers under its purview.
- (3) The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism shall work with local tourism bureaus in each of the Acadiana parishes as well as Orleans and East Baton Rouge parishes to ensure the hiring of at least one French-speaking employee who is a Louisiana resident in each locally-administered visitors' center.
- (4) All state agencies and contractors shall be required to hire Louisiana residents or Louisiana-owned and Louisiana-incorporated entities for positions or service contracts involving French language skills, including but not limited to translation, marketing, audiovisual production, sales, public relations, and academic or scientific research.
- (5) All state agencies shall include French or Creole language skills as a job requirement or preferred qualification for positions that significantly involve Louisiana historical research, archives, cultural development, international tourism, international commerce, and other internationally-oriented positions.

Present law creates the La. Board of International Commerce, which is hereby created within the office of international commerce of the Dept. of Economic Development, and outlines the duties of the board.

Proposed law extends the following duties to the board:

- (1) Develop specific, measurable plans to increase investment from and commercial partnerships with France, Canada, and other Francophone countries, especially in the sectors of energy, environmental protection, transportation, academic and scientific research, tourism and cultural industries including but not limited to French language and culture, music, media, film, television, art, and museums.
- (2) Hire or ensure the hiring by the Dept. of Economic Development of a chief representative from France or Canada who is a La. resident or entity with economic development experience and fluent French language skills.

Present law provides for the membership of the Louisiana Board of International Commerce.

Proposed law adds that the board shall include three members appointed by the governor who represent cultural industries in the state and that such members shall, to the greatest extent practicable, be engaged in international commerce or partnerships. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Proposed law requires the governor to make the appointment from a list of names submitted by the following organizations:

- (1) Louisiana Educational Television Authority.

- (2) Festivals Acadien et Creoles.
- (3) Tele-Louisiane.
- (4) South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center.
- (5) Historic New Orleans Collection.
- (6) New Orleans Jazz Museum.

Present law requires the board to develop a master plan of international commerce in order to position La. as a leader in international commerce.

Proposed law adds an additional requirement that the board shall include in its master plan and annual report a specific section dedicated to developing international commerce with Francophonie countries and outlines some of the criteria required in the plan and report. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Proposed law requires the department to fund and implement projects consistent with this section of the master plan and additional projects consistent with the goals of increasing Francophone international commerce.

(Amends R.S. 12:1-120; Adds R.S. 25:671(5), 672(4), 673(D) and R.S. 51:3135(B)(22) and (23), 3136(A)(10), and 3137(B)(5))