

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 148

BY REPRESENTATIVE CARPENTER

PARKS/RECREATION COMMN: Creates a task force on the policies of the Recreation
and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge

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A RESOLUTION

To create the Task Force on Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton
Rouge Policies to study issues related to the operation, management, funding, and
location of the Baton Rouge Zoo and to provide for a written report of findings and
recommendations to the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural
Affairs not later than December 31, 2018.

WHEREAS, the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton
Rouge (BREC) was created by Act No. 246 of the 1946 Regular Session of the Louisiana
Legislature; and

WHEREAS, BREC is responsible for the maintenance, management, and control of
all parks, playgrounds, play fields, or other property, including the Baton Rouge Zoo,
permanently devoted to recreational purposes located within East Baton Rouge Parish; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, aided by the urging of television personality William
"Buckskin Bill" Black, Baton Rouge taxpayers passed a local property tax that provided
more than three-quarters of a million dollars for the construction of the Baton Rouge Zoo
and matching funds were obtained from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation; and

WHEREAS, construction of the zoo began in 1966 and the zoo first opened on Easter
Sunday, 1970, to residents of East Baton Rouge Parish who fully embraced the concept of
the new zoo and the sense of ownership it instilled in the community; and

1 WHEREAS, over the next forty years, the zoo became a year-round family attraction
2 and vital economic driver in north Baton Rouge with more than a quarter million annual
3 visitors of all ages and backgrounds; and

4 WHEREAS, over the last several years, although BREC receives millions of dollars
5 in funding annually from local property taxes, the facilities at the Baton Rouge Zoo have
6 fallen into disrepair, the number of visitors has declined significantly, and the zoo recently
7 lost its accreditation; and

8 WHEREAS, BREC contends that the zoo cannot survive at its current location and
9 has made a recent push to move the zoo to the Baton Rouge fairgrounds in the southern part
10 of the parish, arguing that a state-of-the-art zoo can be developed at that location which will
11 result in an additional one hundred twenty-five thousand annual visitors; and

12 WHEREAS, the Baton Rouge fairgrounds, which are comprised of one hundred
13 thirty-three acres, were inundated with significant floodwaters during the August 2016 flood
14 and are susceptible to future flooding, which poses a potential threat to all animals that
15 would be housed at that location; and

16 WHEREAS, the zoo currently sits on only a tiny portion of the sprawling six hundred
17 acres of Greenwood Park which provides ample room for the expansion of zoo facilities on
18 property that did not flood during the August 2016 flood; and

19 WHEREAS, BREC should stop wasting taxpayers dollars conducting studies on
20 potential relocation sites for the zoo and should work diligently to improve and expand the
21 zoo at its current location.

22 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the
23 Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Task Force on Recreation and Park
24 Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge Policies to study issues related to the
25 operation, management, funding, and location of the Baton Rouge Zoo and to provide for
26 a written report of findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Municipal,
27 Parochial and Cultural Affairs not later than December 31, 2018.

28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of the
29 following members:

30 (1) The state representative for House District No. 63.

1 (2) The state representative for House District No. 29.

2 (3) The mayor-president of the city of Baton Rouge and parish of East Baton Rouge
3 or his designee.

4 (4) The mayor of the city of Baker or his designee.

5 (5) The mayor of the city of Central or his designee.

6 (6) The mayor of the city of Zachary or his designee.

7 (7) The member of the governing authority of the city of Baton Rouge and parish
8 of East Baton Rouge who represents Council District No. 2.

9 (8) A member of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton
10 Rouge designated by the superintendent of the commission.

11 (9) A practicing veterinarian designated by the state representative for House District
12 No. 63.

13 (10) A representative of Keep the Baton Rouge Zoo at Greenwood Park designated
14 by the state representative for House District No. 63.

15 (11) A member of the governing board of the Baton Rouge North Economic
16 Development District designated by the governing board.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state legislators serving on the task force
18 shall call its first meeting, at which the members shall elect a chairman and take other
19 organizational actions as they deem appropriate.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may request administrative
21 support from any state or local entity.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HR 148 Engrossed 2018 Regular Session Carpenter

Creates the Task Force on Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge Policies to study issues related to the operation, management, funding, and location of the Baton Rouge Zoo. Provides for a written report of findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs not later than Dec. 31, 2018.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs to the original resolution:

1. Add the mayors of the cities of Central and Zachary to the task force.
2. Replace the state representative for House District No. 67 with the state representative for House District No. 29 as a member of the task force.