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AB-2561 Local public employees: vacant positions. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Bill No. 2561

CHAPTER 409

An act to add Section 3502.3 to the Government Code, relating to public employment.

[Approved by Governor September 22, 2024. Filed with Secretary of State September 22, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2561, McKinnor. Local public employees: vacant positions.

Existing law, the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act (act), authorizes local public employees, as defined, to form, join, and participate in the activities of employee organizations of their own choosing for the purpose of representation on matters of labor relations. The act requires the governing body of a public agency to meet and confer in good faith regarding wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment with representatives of recognized employee organizations and to consider fully presentations that are made by the employee organization on behalf of its members before arriving at a determination of policy or course of action.

This bill would, as specified, require a public agency to present the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing at least once per fiscal year, and would entitle the recognized employee organization to present at the hearing. If the number of job vacancies within a single bargaining unit meets or exceeds 20% of the total number of authorized full-time positions, the bill would require the public agency, upon request of the recognized employee organization, to include specified information during the public hearing. By imposing new duties on local public agencies, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The bill would also include related legislative findings.

The California Constitution requires local agencies, for the purpose of ensuring public access to the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies, to comply with a statutory enactment that amends or enacts laws relating to public records or open meetings and contains findings demonstrating that the enactment furthers the constitutional requirements relating to this purpose.

This bill would make legislative findings to that effect.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions for costs mandated by the state pursuant to this act, but would recognize that a local agency or school district may pursue any available remedies to seek reimbursement for these costs.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:

- (a) Job vacancies in local government are a widespread and significant problem for the public sector affecting occupations across wage levels and educational requirements.
- (b) High job vacancies impact public service delivery and the workers who are forced to handle heavier workloads, with understaffing leading to burnout and increased turnover that further exacerbate staffing challenges.
- (c) There is a statewide interest in ensuring that public agency operations are appropriately staffed and that high vacancy rates do not undermine public employee labor relations.

SEC. 2. Section 3502.3 is added to the Government Code, to read:

3502.3. (a) (1) A public agency shall present the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts during a public hearing before the governing board at least once per fiscal year.

(2) If the governing board will be adopting an annual or multiyear budget during the fiscal year, the presentation shall be made prior to the adoption of the final budget.

(3) During the hearing, the public agency shall identify any necessary changes to policies, procedures, and recruitment activities that may lead to obstacles in the hiring process.

(b) The recognized employee organization for a bargaining unit shall be entitled to make a presentation at the public hearing at which the public agency presents the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts for positions within that bargaining unit.

(c) If the number of job vacancies within a single bargaining unit meets or exceeds 20 percent of the total number of authorized full-time positions, the public agency shall, upon request of the recognized employee organization, include all of the following information during the public hearing:

- (1) The total number of job vacancies within the bargaining unit.
- (2) The total number of applicants for vacant positions within the bargaining unit.
- (3) The average number of days to complete the hiring process from when a position is posted.
- (4) Opportunities to improve compensation and other working conditions.

(d) This section shall not prevent the governing board from holding additional public hearings about vacancies.

(e) The provisions of this section are severable. If any provision of this section or its application is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.

(f) For purposes of this section, "recognized employee organization" has the same meaning as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 3501.

SEC. 3. The Legislature finds and declares that Section 2 of this act, which adds Section 3502.3 to the Government Code, furthers, within the meaning of paragraph (7) of subdivision (b) of Section 3 of Article I of the California Constitution, the purposes of that constitutional section as it relates to the right of public access to the meetings of local public bodies or the writings of local public officials and local agencies. Pursuant to paragraph (7) of subdivision (b) of Section 3 of Article I of the California Constitution, the Legislature makes the following findings:

It is in the public interest, and it furthers the purposes of paragraph (7) of subdivision (b) of Section (3) of Article I of the California Constitution, to ensure that information concerning public agency employment is available to the public.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code for costs mandated by the state pursuant to this act. It is recognized, however, that a local agency or school district may pursue any remedies to obtain reimbursement available to it under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) and any other law.