

AN ACT

relating to the continuation and functions of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 1002.003, Occupations Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1002.003. APPLICATION OF SUNSET ACT. The Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists is subject to Chapter 325, Government Code (Texas Sunset Act). Unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, the board is abolished and this chapter expires September 1, 2025 [2019].

SECTION 2. Section 1002.057, Occupations Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (a-1) to read as follows:

(a) The governor shall designate a member of the board as the presiding officer of the board to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the governor.

(a-1) The board shall elect biennially from its own membership an [~~a presiding officer,~~] assistant presiding officer[~~,~~] and a secretary-treasurer. A member may not hold a position described by this subsection [~~one of these positions~~] for more than two consecutive two-year periods. A member serves in a [~~the~~] position described by this subsection at the will of the board and may be removed from that [~~the~~]

position by a two-thirds majority vote of the board.

SECTION 3. Section 1002.060, Occupations Code, is amended by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (d) to read as follows:

(b) The training program must provide the person with information regarding:

(1) the law governing board operations [~~legislation that created the board~~];

(2) the board's programs, functions, rules, and budget [~~operated by the board~~];

(3) the scope of and limitations on the rulemaking authority of the board [~~role and functions of the board~~];

(4) the types of board rules, interpretations, and enforcement actions that may implicate federal antitrust law by limiting competition or impacting prices charged by persons engaged in a profession or business the board regulates, including any rule, interpretation, or enforcement action that:

(A) regulates the scope of practice of persons in a profession or business the board regulates;

(B) restricts advertising by persons in a profession or business the board regulates;

(C) affects the price of goods or services provided by persons in a profession or business the board regulates; or

(D) restricts participation in a profession or business the board regulates [~~rules of the board, with an emphasis on the rules that relate to disciplinary and investigative authority~~];

(5) ~~[the current budget for the board;~~

~~[(6)]~~ the results of the most recent formal audit of the board;

(6) ~~[(7)]~~ the requirements of:

(A) laws relating to [the] open meetings, ~~[law, Chapter 551, Government Code;~~

~~[(B) the] public information,~~ ~~[law, Chapter 552, Government Code;~~

~~[(C) the] administrative procedure,~~ and disclosure of conflicts of interest [law, Chapter 2001, Government Code]; and

(B) ~~[(D)]~~ other laws applicable to members of a state policymaking body in performing their duties ~~[relating to public officials, including conflict-of-interest laws];~~ and

(7) ~~[(8)]~~ any applicable ethics policies adopted by the board or the Texas Ethics Commission.

(d) The executive director of the board shall create a training manual that includes the information required by Subsection (b). The executive director shall distribute a copy of the training manual annually to each member of the board. Each member of the board shall sign and submit to the executive director a statement acknowledging that the member received and has reviewed the training manual.

SECTION 4. Subchapter D, Chapter 1002, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Section 1002.1511 to read as follows:

Sec. 1002.1511. NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING; ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION. (a) The board shall develop a policy to encourage the use

of:

(1) negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code, for the adoption of board rules; and

(2) appropriate alternative dispute resolution procedures under Chapter 2009, Government Code, to assist in the resolution of internal and external disputes under the board's jurisdiction.

(b) The board's procedures relating to alternative dispute resolution must conform, to the extent possible, to any model guidelines issued by the State Office of Administrative Hearings for the use of alternative dispute resolution by state agencies.

(c) The board shall:

(1) coordinate the implementation of the policy adopted under Subsection (a);

(2) provide training as needed to implement the procedures for negotiated rulemaking or alternative dispute resolution; and

(3) collect data concerning the effectiveness of those procedures.

SECTION 5. Section 1002.204, Occupations Code, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(a) The board shall maintain a system to promptly and efficiently act on complaints filed with the board. The board shall provide to the person filing the complaint and to each person who is a subject of the complaint a copy of the board's policies and procedures relating to complaint investigation and resolution.

(c) The board may employ or contract with advisors, consultants,

geoscientists, engineers, or other persons to provide technical assistance in investigations and disciplinary proceedings. Except for an action involving fraud, conspiracy, or malice, a person whose services are obtained by the board under this subsection is immune from civil liability and may not be subjected to a suit for damages for any investigation, report, recommendation, statement, evaluation, finding made, or other action taken in the course of performing the person's official duties.

SECTION 6. Sections 1002.253(a) and (c), Occupations Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) An applicant for a license under this chapter, including an applicant for a temporary or reciprocal license, must apply on a form prescribed by the board that is signed [~~and sworn to~~] by the applicant [~~before a notary public~~].

(c) The application must be accompanied by[~~+~~

~~[(1) not fewer than five reference letters, of which not fewer than three are from geoscientists, or other professionals acceptable to the board, who have personal knowledge of the applicant's relevant work experience; and~~

~~[(2)]~~ the appropriate application fee.

SECTION 7. Section 1002.255, Occupations Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1002.255. LICENSE ELIGIBILITY. (a) To be eligible for a license under this chapter, an applicant must:

(1) [~~be of good moral and ethical character as attested to by~~

~~letters of reference submitted in behalf of the applicant or as otherwise determined by the board;~~

~~(2)~~ have:

(A) graduated from a course of study in a discipline of geoscience satisfactory to the board that consists of at least four years of study and includes at least 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours of credit in geoscience, of which at least 20 semester hours or 30 quarter hours of credit must be in upper-level college courses in that discipline; or

(B) satisfactorily completed other equivalent educational requirements as determined by the board;

(2) ~~(3)~~ have a documented record of at least five years of qualifying work experience, as provided by Section 1002.256, that demonstrates that the applicant is qualified to assume responsible charge of geoscientific work;

(3) ~~(4)~~ pass an examination required by the board covering the fundamentals and practice of the appropriate discipline of geoscience; and

(4) ~~(5)~~ meet any other requirements established by the board.

(b) The board may accept qualifying work experience in lieu of the education required by Subsection (a) (1) ~~(a) (2)~~.

SECTION 8. Section 1002.257(a), Occupations Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The board by rule may authorize the licensing of a person who

has not met the examination requirement of Section 1002.255(a)(3) [~~1002.255(a)(4)~~] if the person is licensed or registered to practice a discipline of geoscience under the law of another state or a foreign country.

SECTION 9. Section 1002.260, Occupations Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 1002.260. CONFIDENTIALITY OF CERTAIN INFORMATION. A statement made by a person who provides [~~a reference for an applicant for a license under this chapter or provides~~] any information compiled by or submitted to the board relating to an applicant is privileged and confidential and may be used only by the board or an employee or agent of the board who is directly involved in the application or licensure process. Confidential information under this section is not subject to discovery, subpoena, or other disclosure in any proceeding.

SECTION 10. Section 1002.452(b), Occupations Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b) The amount of the penalty may not exceed \$1,500 [~~\$100~~] for each violation. Each day a violation continues or occurs is a separate violation for purposes of imposing a penalty.

SECTION 11. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) of this section, Section 1002.060, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act, applies to a member of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists appointed before, on, or after the effective date of this Act.

(b) A member of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists who, before the effective date of this Act, completed the training program

required by Section 1002.060, Occupations Code, as that law existed before the effective date of this Act, is required to complete additional training only on subjects added by this Act to the training program as required by Section 1002.060, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act. A board member described by this subsection may not vote, deliberate, or be counted as a member in attendance at a meeting of the board held on or after December 1, 2019, until the member completes the additional training.

SECTION 12. Sections 1002.253 and 1002.255, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act, apply only to an application for a license to practice geoscience filed on or after the effective date of this Act. An application for a license filed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the application was filed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 13. As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the governor shall designate a member of the Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists as the presiding officer of the board pursuant to Section 1002.057, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 14. Section 1002.452, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act, applies only to conduct that occurs on or after the effective date of this Act. Conduct that occurs before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the conduct occurred, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 15. This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.

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President of the Senate

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Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1311 was passed by the House on April 5, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 111, Nays 15, 2 present, not voting.

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Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1311 was passed by the Senate on May 1, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 30, Nays 1.

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Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Date

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Governor