

ASSEMBLY, No. 570

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman ROBERT AUTH
District 39 (Bergen and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Concerns county government dissolution.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ACT** requiring the “Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization, and
2 Consolidation Commission” to recommend a process for the
3 dissolution of county government.
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*
7

8 1. The Legislature finds and declares:

9 a. Many of the traditional functions of county government have
10 been assumed by other local units and the State in recent decades.

11 b. As has been demonstrated by Connecticut and Rhode Island,
12 neither of which have county government, and also by
13 Massachusetts, where most county governments have been
14 abolished since the 1990s, all of the functions of county government
15 can be performed by the State, municipalities, or other local units.

16 c. Many of the functions of county government are redundant
17 and duplicative of the functions of other local units, and the State,
18 resulting in an unnecessary and costly governmental layer that is no
19 longer relevant to the taxpayers of this State.

20 d. Abolishing county government and transferring its functions
21 to other local units and the State, would reduce the property tax
22 burden of New Jersey residents.

23 e. Any approach to abolishing county government will
24 inevitably address challenging issues, such as how to most fairly
25 allocate county property, debt, and service responsibilities, and will
26 impact numerous stakeholders who should be offered a substantial
27 opportunity to discuss their perspectives.

28 f. Determining the most appropriate approach to dissolve
29 county government for the purpose of reducing the property tax
30 burden will be a complex task that should involve a careful,
31 deliberative process, in which the individuals most recognized for
32 expertise on the functions of government in New Jersey at the State,
33 county, and municipal levels, should be closely involved.
34

35 2. a. The “Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization, and
36 Consolidation Commission,” established pursuant to section 3 of
37 P.L.2007, c.54 (C.52:27D-503), shall study and report on the
38 structure and functions of county government, including services
39 provided and the funding sources for those services, the statutory
40 bases for the services provided and funding sources, the current
41 relationship between the county, other local governments and the
42 State, the most appropriate reallocation of county service delivery
43 responsibilities from the standpoint of efficiency, and the most
44 efficient process and timeline for the dissolution of county
45 government.

46 b. The commission shall produce a report and recommend
47 specific legislative changes that would abolish county government,
48 and allow for more efficient local government operation in the
49 process.

1 c. Within 18 months following the effective date of this act, the
2 commission shall submit its report and legislative recommendations
3 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of
4 the Senate, the Speaker of the General Assembly, and the Minority
5 Leader of the General Assembly pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991,
6 c.164 (C.52:14-19.1). The report and legislative recommendations
7 shall also be available to the public through the State's Internet
8 website.

9
10 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

11 12 13 STATEMENT

14
15 This bill requires the "Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization,
16 and Consolidation Commission" to study and produce a report,
17 together with specific legislative recommendations to establish a
18 process for the dissolution of county government in New Jersey.

19 As has been demonstrated by Connecticut and Rhode Island,
20 neither of which have county government, and also by
21 Massachusetts, where most county governments have been
22 abolished since the 1990s, all of the functions of county government
23 can be performed by the State, municipalities, or other local units.
24 Many of the functions of county government are redundant and
25 duplicative. This results in an unnecessary and costly governmental
26 layer that is no longer necessary for the taxpayers of this State.

27 Determining the most appropriate approach to abolish county
28 government for the purpose of reducing the property tax burden will
29 be a complex task. This challenge should involve a careful,
30 deliberative process, in which the individuals most recognized for
31 expertise on the functions of government in New Jersey at the State,
32 county, and municipal levels, should be closely involved.

33 This bill requires the "Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization,
34 and Consolidation Commission," established pursuant to section 3
35 of P.L.2007, c.54 (C.52:27D-503), to study and report on the
36 structure, functions and funding sources of county government, the
37 current relationship between the county and other units of
38 government, the most appropriate approach to reallocating county
39 debt and service responsibilities, and the most efficient process and
40 timeline for the dissolution of county government.

41 The bill requires the commission to produce a report, and
42 recommend specific legislative changes that would abolish county
43 government and allow for more efficient local government
44 operation in the process. Within 18 months following the bill's
45 effective date, the commission would submit its report and
46 legislative recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, and
47 the public.