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**An Act To Reduce the Participation Thresholds for Various Municipal Referenda and To Change the Measurement of Those Thresholds from Votes Cast for and against the Question to Votes in Favor of the Question**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §1466, sub-§9**, as amended by PL 2013, c. 461, §1, is further amended to read:

**9. Required vote.** Before the municipality may withdraw from the regional school unit, the withdrawal agreement must be approved by a majority vote of those casting valid votes in the municipality, and the ~~total~~ number of votes cast ~~for and against~~ in favor of withdrawal at the municipal vote must equal or exceed ~~50%~~25% of the total number of votes cast in the municipality for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

**Sec. 2. 30-A MRSA §2105, sub-§4**, as enacted by PL 1987, c. 737, Pt. A, §2 and Pt. C, §106 and amended by PL 1989, c. 6; c. 9, §2; and c. 104, Pt. C, §§8 and 10, is further amended to read:

**4. Effective date.** If a ~~majority~~more of the ~~ballots~~votes cast on any question under subsection 1 or 2 favor acceptance than oppose it, the new charter, charter revision, charter modification or charter amendment proposed in that question becomes effective as provided in this subsection, ~~provided as long as~~ as the ~~total~~ number of votes cast ~~for and against~~ in favor of the question equals or exceeds ~~30%~~15% of the total votes cast in the municipality for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

A. Except as provided in subparagraph (1), new charters, charter revisions or charter modifications adopted by the voters take effect on the first day of the next succeeding municipal year.

(1) New charters, charter revisions or charter modifications take effect immediately for the purpose of conducting any elections required by the new provisions.

B. Charter amendments adopted by the voters take effect on the date determined by the municipal officers, but not later than the first day of the next municipal year.

**Sec. 3. 30-A MRSA §7209, sub-§2**, as enacted by PL 1989, c. 216, §2, is amended to read:

**2. Requirements for approval.** The voters shall indicate their opinion on this question by a cross or check mark placed against the word "Yes" or "No." Before becoming effective, the deorganization must be approved by at least 2/3 of ~~the voter~~those voting ~~in the general election~~for or against deorganization and the ~~total~~ number of votes cast ~~for and against~~ in favor of deorganization at the ~~election~~ must equal or exceed ~~50%~~1/3 of the total number of votes cast in the municipality for Governor at the last gubernatorial election.

## SUMMARY

This bill changes the requirements for a municipality to withdraw from a regional school unit following a vote on a withdrawal agreement. Current law requires that the total number of votes cast for and against withdrawal equal or exceed 50% of the total votes cast in the municipality for Governor in the last gubernatorial election. This bill requires instead that the number of votes cast in favor of withdrawal equal or exceed 25% of the total votes cast in the municipality for Governor in the last gubernatorial election. A majority vote in favor of withdrawal is still required, and a 2/3 vote in favor of withdrawal is still required if the municipality is part of a school administrative district that was reformulated as a regional school unit pursuant to the school unit consolidation laws.

This bill also changes the requirements for a new municipal charter, charter revision, charter modification or charter amendment in a question before the voters to go into effect. Current law requires that the total number of votes cast for and against the question equal or exceed 30% of the total votes cast in the municipality in the last gubernatorial election. This bill requires instead that the number of votes cast in favor of the proposed change equal or exceed 15% of the total votes cast in the municipality in the last gubernatorial election and clarifies that this means votes cast for Governor in that election. Also, while this bill does not change the requirement that a majority of votes cast for and against the proposed change be in favor of it in order for that change to go into effect, it clarifies that blank votes are not counted in that calculation.

This bill also changes the requirements for a deorganization of a municipality to go into effect following a vote on final approval. Current law requires that the total number of votes cast for and against deorganization must equal or exceed 50% of the total votes cast in the municipality for Governor in the last gubernatorial election in order for the deorganization to go into effect. This bill requires instead that the number of votes cast in favor of deorganization must equal or exceed 1/3 of the total votes cast in the municipality for Governor in the last gubernatorial election. Also, while this bill retains the requirement that the deorganization be approved by 2/3 of the voters in order for it to go into effect, it clarifies that that means 2/3 of those voting for or against deorganization in that election.