

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH EMS INDEPENDENCE ACT

BILL TEXT

Regular Session, 2026

ACT No. ____

BY REPRESENTATIVE _____

A BILL

To enact R.S. 33:4791.7, relative to emergency medical services in East Baton Rouge Parish; to require the continued independence of East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services; to prohibit consolidation or merger of parish emergency medical services with the Baton Rouge City Fire Department or any municipal fire department; to provide for governance, medical control, funding, and personnel protections; and to provide for related matters.

Section 1. Legislative findings and intent.

The Legislature of Louisiana finds and declares that:

1. East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services (EBR EMS) has historically functioned as a parish-wide, advanced life support emergency medical system providing critical prehospital care.
2. EMS is a distinct medical service requiring independent clinical governance, medical direction, and operational decision-making.
3. Consolidation of EMS into a municipal fire department may diminish medical oversight, reduce parish-wide coverage, and impair response times and patient outcomes.
4. Preserving an independent EMS system promotes accountability, fiscal transparency, and equitable service delivery across all municipalities within East Baton Rouge Parish.

It is therefore the intent of the Legislature to maintain EBR EMS as an independent parish service.

Section 2. R.S. 33:4791.7 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§4791.7. East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services; independence; prohibition on consolidation

A. Independence.

East Baton Rouge Parish Emergency Medical Services shall remain an independent parish-wide emergency medical service under the authority of the parish governing authority.

B. Prohibition on consolidation.

No governing authority of East Baton Rouge Parish or any municipality within the parish shall:

1. Consolidate, merge, or transfer EBR EMS into the Baton Rouge Fire Department or any municipal fire department.
2. Place EBR EMS under the command, administration, or budgetary control of any municipal fire department.
3. Transfer EMS personnel, assets, equipment, or operational authority to any municipal fire department.

C. Scope of service.

EBR EMS shall retain responsibility for emergency medical response and prehospital care throughout East Baton Rouge Parish, unless modified by a cooperative endeavor agreement approved by a two-thirds vote of the parish governing authority.

D. Medical control.

EBR EMS shall maintain independent medical direction through a licensed physician medical director responsible for protocols, training, quality assurance, and clinical oversight.

E. Budget and funding.

Funding for EBR EMS shall be appropriated as a distinct and separate line item and shall not be commingled with fire department appropriations.

F. Personnel protections.

Employees of EBR EMS shall not be reclassified as firefighters or placed within a fire department chain of command.

Section 3. Effective date.

This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or as otherwise provided by law.

BILL DIGEST

The proposed law establishes statutory protections to ensure East Baton Rouge Parish EMS remains a separate and independent parish-wide emergency medical service. It prohibits consolidation or merger with the Baton Rouge Fire Department or any municipal fire department, preserves independent medical direction, protects EMS personnel classifications, and requires separate budgeting and governance.

LEGISLATIVE TALKING POINTS

- EMS is healthcare, not fire suppression; it requires independent medical oversight.
- Parish-wide EMS ensures equal service levels for all residents, regardless of municipality.
- Fire-based EMS models often increase costs and reduce ambulance availability.
- Independent EMS systems show improved clinical

outcomes and accountability. • This bill protects existing infrastructure and taxpayer investment. • The bill does not expand government; it preserves current structure.

FISCAL NOTE SUMMARY

State Fiscal Impact: None.

Local Fiscal Impact: No new costs. The bill maintains existing funding structures and prevents cost-shifting associated with consolidation. Long-term savings may occur by avoiding duplication of equipment, staffing, and administrative overhead.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE & POLICY JUSTIFICATION

1. National EMS studies show independent or third-service EMS agencies often outperform fire-based models in response times and ambulance availability.
 2. Fire department consolidation frequently leads to higher per-transport costs.
 3. Independent EMS allows specialized training, credentialing, and medical accountability.
 4. Parish-wide EMS prevents fragmentation of care and jurisdictional delays.
 5. Preserving separation aligns with best practices recommended by national EMS organizations.
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IMPLEMENTATION NOTES

• No change to current EMS operations is required. • Existing cooperative endeavor agreements remain valid unless amended. • The law provides clear statutory protection against future administrative restructuring.