The Louisiana Engineering Society (LES) is sponsoring legislation supported by the Louisiana Professional Engineering and Land Surveying Board (LAPELS) to make changes to the Engineering and Land Surveying licensing law. While most of the items are housekeeping, there is one change that is a bit more substantive in nature. This proposed change provides an alternative path to licensure as a Professional Engineer in Louisiana, copying what has already been done in numerous states around the country.

\[(c)\] A graduate of an accredited engineering curriculum of four years or more approved by the board as being of satisfactory standing, who has twenty or more years of progressive engineering experience in work acceptable to the board, who is of good character and reputation, who has passed the examinations required by the board, and who has satisfied the requirements of R.S. 37:694.

This change would allow an engineer with 20 years of progressive experience and that has passed the PE exam to be licensed in Louisiana without having taken or passed the FE (Fundamentals of Engineering) exam (also known by many as the EIT exam). This change would in effect substitute 16 years of progressive engineering experience for the FE exam.

- **Why make this change now?**

  As most engineers are aware, our laws and rules require that a comity applicant meet the same requirements that were in place in Louisiana at the time they received their license in another state. Unfortunately, not all states had the same requirements in the past and many states did not have the FE exam as a requirement for PE licensure as early as Louisiana. This creates a hardship on many licensees attempting to get a license in Louisiana. Many qualified engineers from other states are denied licensure in Louisiana because of the lack of the FE exam.

  Across the country, there have been many attacks on engineering licensure. The claims are that licensure creates undue restrictions on mobility between the states. We believe this alternative path to licensure will increase mobility without materially reducing the requirements for licensure and the protections to the public it affords.

  Also this allows Louisiana residents with engineering degrees who have worked in industries that did not require or promote licensure to become registered once they have either retired from or left that industry without taking the FE exam if they meet the 20 year experiential requirement.

- **Doesn’t this “water down” the licensing law in Louisiana?**

  No. LES does not believe this change will “water down” the current requirements. The FE exam is about general engineering fundamentals learned in college. The best time for someone to take FE exam is when they are in the final year of Engineering as that is the
time when most of the engineering fundamentals would still be fresh in their memory. Substituting sixteen additional years of progressive engineering work experience for what is essentially a college level exam is hardly watering down the requirements to be a PE in Louisiana. LAPELS is charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Louisiana and the Board does not believe this change will threaten those protections.

- **Wasn’t a similar bill strongly opposed by LAPELS and LES a few years ago?**

  There were bills in the past that attempted to allow engineers to get licensed in Louisiana without taking the FE exam, but they were very different from the current bill. Those bills attempted to give the authority to waive the FE exam to the LAPELS Board at its discretion regardless of the amount of engineering experience. The LAPELS Board and LES opposed these bills as subjective and arbitrary and because of the potential for outside pressures to relax requirements for the licensure for some applicants. The proposed bill differs significantly in that a potential licensee must have 20 years of progressive engineering experience and have passed the PE (Principles of Practice) exam before they can be approved for licensure in Louisiana.

- **Do any other states have a similar path to licensure without the FE?**

  Yes. Currently over 30 other states have similar paths to licensure. The time frame for the waiver varies from 12 years to 20 years of experience.