§ 219-d. Authorization to adopt service award programs. 1. No political subdivision shall be required to adopt a service award program. Any service award program adopted pursuant to this section shall be governed by the provisions of this article.

2. A political subdivision may adopt a service award program for the volunteer ambulance workers of ambulance companies which are either:

(a) a municipal ambulance service of the political subdivision; or

(b) a voluntary ambulance service which provides service to the political subdivision under contract with the governing board thereof and has its principal headquarters in the political subdivision.

3. A service award program may be adopted only by resolution of the governing board of a political subdivision receiving the affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of the governing board and the approval of a proposition authorizing the adoption of the program at a referendum of the electors of the political subdivision.

4. The resolution authorizing adoption of a service award program shall state:

(a) the name of each volunteer ambulance company having volunteer ambulance workers who are potential participants in the program;

(b) the entitlement age under the program;

(c) the number of years of ambulance service required to obtain a nonforfeitable right to a service award;

(d) the activities for which points shall be granted toward a year of ambulance service;

(e) the amount of the contribution to the program to be made by the sponsor on behalf of each participant credited with a year of ambulance service;

(f) the extent to which the program provides for contributions for ambulance service rendered by a participant during one or more of the five calendar years immediately preceding the adoption of the program;

(g) in the case of a service award program which provides for contributions for ambulance service rendered by a participant during one or more of the five calendar years immediately preceding the adoption of the program, the timing and method of financing such contributions;

(h) the date as of which the program shall take effect;

(i) in the case of a service award program to take effect on a day other than the first day of January, whether points toward a year of ambulance service shall be granted for activities performed prior to the effective date of the program and on or after the immediately preceding first day of January; and

(j) the date on which the proposition authorizing the adoption of the program shall be submitted to referendum.

5. The proposition authorizing adoption of the service award program shall be submitted to referendum not less than thirty days and not more than ninety days after the governing board votes to authorize the adoption of the program. Notice of the referendum shall be published at least once, not less than fourteen days prior to the date of the referendum, in the official newspaper of the political subdivision or, if the political subdivision does not have an official newspaper, in one or more newspapers having general circulation in the political subdivision. The referendum shall be conducted and the cost thereof charged in the same manner as other referenda held by the political subdivision.

6. The proposition shall state: (a) the estimated annual cost of the service award program;

(b) the portion of the estimated annual cost of the program, if any, to be paid by one or more other political subdivisions;

(c) the estimated annual cost per participant;

(d) in the case of a proposition to be voted on at a referendum held on or after January first, nineteen hundred ninety-five, the estimated annual administration fee;

(e) the extent to which the program provides for contributions for ambulance service rendered by a participant during one or more of the five calendar years immediately preceding the adoption of the program and the estimated cost thereof; and

(f) in the case of a service award program to take effect on a day other than the first day of January, whether points toward a year of ambulance service shall be granted for activities performed prior to the effective date of the program and on or after the immediately preceding

first day of January.

7. Upon approval of the proposition, the service award program shall be deemed adopted by the political subdivision in accordance with the terms of the resolution adopted by the governing board.

8. (a) Once a service award program has been adopted, participation therein by the sponsor may be terminated, or the amount of the sponsor's contribution to the program may be changed, or the program may be amended to provide for contributions for ambulance service rendered by a participant during one or more of the five calendar years immediately preceding the adoption of the program, by resolution of the governing board of the sponsor receiving the affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of the governing board and the approval of a proposition at a referendum of the electors of the sponsor.

(b) The entitlement age, the number of years of ambulance service required to obtain a nonforfeitable right to a service award, and the activities for which points shall be granted toward a year of ambulance service may be changed by resolution adopted by the affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of the governing board of the sponsor without referendum; provided, that, consistent with the provisions of subdivision three of section two hundred nineteen-e of this article, if the effect of the amendment is to increase the number of points granted for the performance of the activity, decrease the amount of an activity required to earn the points granted for the performance of the activity, or both, such amendment shall be subject to a mandatory referendum. Any amendment to a service award program shall only take effect as of the first of January next succeeding completion of the proceedings required for adoption of the amendment and shall only apply prospectively.

(c) The sponsor's participation in a service award program adopted for the volunteer ambulance workers of one or more ambulance companies described in paragraph (b) of subdivision two of this section shall be suspended to the extent that service credit shall not be granted for activities performed by the volunteer ambulance workers of any such ambulance company during any period in which the company ceases to provide service to the sponsor under contract with the governing board thereof.