

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1517
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Elections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The 77th Legislature required the secretary of state to establish a telephone hotline for the reporting of an existing or potential abuse of voter rights. The average voter, however, may not be aware of all of the voting rights protected by state law, thus making the existence of the hotline ineffective for many voters. CSHB 1517 would require the publicizing of a “voter’s bill of rights,” along with the hotline number.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee’s opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the secretary of state in SECTION 2(Section 62.0115, Election Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

CSHB 1517 amends the Election Code by requiring the secretary of state to adopt rules providing for the publicizing of voters’ rights. The bill provides that these rules must require that a notice of these rights (notice) be publicized by being posted in a prominent location at each polling place, on the secretary of state’s internet website, through material published by the secretary of state, or in another manner designed to give voters notice of their rights.

The bill sets forth the rights and information that the notice must contain. The bill requires the secretary of state to prescribe the form and content of the notice and to revise the content of the notice as necessary to ensure that the notice accurately reflects the law in effect at the time the notice is publicized.

The bill deletes the provisions specifying the manner of the posting of the notice relating to the Voters’ Rights Hotline alone.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2003.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

CSHB 1517 modifies the original by adding the requirement that the secretary of state adopt rules relating to the publicizing of voters’ rights. The substitute also adds the requirement that the secretary of state revise the content of the notice as necessary for it to accurately reflect current law.

The substitute adds the Internet website of the secretary of state, material published by the secretary of state, and another manner to the possible methods for publicizing the notice of voters’ rights.

The substitute removes provisions relating to a voter’s right to cast a straight party ticket and to the right

of a voter finally convicted of a felony who has been fully discharged of the sentence for that offense to register to vote from the rights that must be included on the notice.