

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 626
By: King, Phil
Elections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Effective voter registration is the bedrock of a modern election system. By the end of 2009, Texas must begin compliance with the Federal Real ID Act which requires proof of citizenship to obtain a drivers license. Therefore, under the provisions of the Motor Voter Law, citizenship will be required to register to vote when obtaining a drivers license. Without some change in the registration laws there will be double standard of voter registration in Texas - those done through a more stringent motor voter and those done through a voter registrar.

While there is no evidence of extensive fraud in Texas elections or of multiple voting, both can occur and it could affect the outcome of close elections. Our election system cannot inspire public confidence if no safeguards exist to deter or detect fraud or to confirm the eligibility of voters. C.S.H.B. 626 modifies provisions requiring a voter to present proof of citizenship when registering to vote and would change the prescribed form for voter registration requests by mail.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 626 amends Section 13.002 of the Election Code by providing that a applicant desiring to register to vote must include a certified copy of a document providing proof that an applicant is a United States citizen. The bill states that the following documentation may be acceptable proofs of citizenship: a birth certificate or other documents confirming birth that is admissible in a court of law, United States citizenship papers issued to the applicant, or an unexpired United States passport issued to the applicant.

This legislation amends the Election Code by eliminating the postcard from mail in registration and states that the official prescribed application form for registration by mail must be in the form of business reply mail, unless otherwise stated by the Election Code.

The change in law made by this bill applies only to an application for voter registration that is submitted on or after the effective date of this Act.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 626 changes H.B. 626 by removing SECTIONS 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 of H.B. 626.