

**SUBJECT:** Election precinct and polling place revisions

**COMMITTEE:** Elections — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Danburg, Madden, Denny, Ehrhardt, Hill, J. Jones, Muñoz, Staples

1 nay — Crabb

0 absent

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** The Election Code allows counties to combine election precincts when precincts have fewer than 500 registered voters.

The code also prohibits bystanders from being in a polling place from the time the presiding judge arrives on election day to make the preliminary arrangements until the precinct returns are certified.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 2243 would amend the Election Code to allow counties with a population of 250,000 or more to combine election precincts if the changes result in precincts containing 500 to 750 registered voters.

The bill would amend the provision on bystanders to make it a Class C misdemeanor (maximum \$500 fine) for a candidate to be at a polling place except to vote or conduct official business in the building in which the polling place was located. The prohibition would apply to early-voting polling places during the early voting period.

The population brackets for counties required to establish early voting places in each commissioner precinct would be changed from 100,000 to 400,000 to 150,000 to 400,000. For counties with a population between 100,000 and 150,000, an early voting polling place would be required in a precinct if 15 registered voters of that precinct made a written request.

A provision for voting a limited ballot by personal appearance, now applying only to Dallas and Harris Counties (population over 1.5 million) would apply generally.

A regular county polling place could be used for joint elections. Precinct conventions could be held on the same day in the same building following certain guidelines. Precinct information would be required to be posted outside and in bold print. Limits on holding party primary elections in the same building on the same day would be eliminated.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

NOTES: The committee substitute incorporated provisions from various bills, including parts of HB 540 by Danburg, HB 1096, HB 583, HB 260 and HB 258 by Madden and HB 271 by Denny.