

SUBJECT: Allowing certain election administrators to combine election precincts

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Laubenberg, Goldman, Israel, Reynolds, Schofield
0 nays
2 absent — Fallon, Phelan

WITNESSES: For — Ed Johnson, Harris County Clerk's Office; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Dana DeBeauvoir, County Clerks Legislative Committee; LaQuan Rogers, Get Fit Wit Me; George Hammerlein, Harris County Clerk's Office; Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; John Oldham, Texas Association of Elections Administrators; Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; Colleen Vera)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Bill Fairbrother, Texas Republican County Chairmen's Association; Ashley Fischer, Office of the Secretary of State, Keith Ingram, Texas Secretary of State, Elections Division)

BACKGROUND: Under Election Code, sec. 42.0051, commissioners courts and county executive committees of political parties may combine election precincts to avoid unreasonable expenditures for elections in:

- counties that have a population of less than 250,000, if the consolidated precinct has less than 500 registered voters;
- counties that have a population of 250,000 or more, if the consolidated precinct has less than 750 registered voters.

Election Code, sec. 42.006 limits the size of a county election precinct to 5,000 registered voters.

DIGEST: HB 2356 would allow commissioners courts for general or special

elections or county executive committees of political parties for primary elections to combine election precincts to avoid unreasonable expenditures for elections if:

- the county had a population of 250,000 or more regardless of the number of voters in the precinct; or
- the county had a population of less than 250,000 and the consolidated precinct had less than 500 registered voters.

The bill would repeal Election Code, sec. 42.0051(b), which provides restrictions in current law on the consolidation of consolidated precincts with populations greater than 250,000.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.