

SUBJECT: Providing notice of party convention information to primary voters

COMMITTEE: Elections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Laubenberg, Israel, Fallon, Larson, Swanson

0 nays

2 absent — R. Anderson, Reynolds

WITNESSES: For — John Bucy, Texas Democratic County Chairs Association; Manny Garcia, Texas Democratic Party; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Crystal Perkins, Texas Democratic Party; John Richie, Texas Democratic County Chairs Association; Bill Fairbrother, Texas Republican County Chairmen's Association; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — Chris Davis, Texas Association of Elections Administrators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cary Roberts, County and District Clerks' Association of Texas; Deborah Kelting)

On — Ed Johnson, Harris County Clerk's Office; Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Keith Ingram, Texas Secretary of State-Elections Division

BACKGROUND: Election Code, sec. 172.1111 requires a presiding judge, before opening the polls in a primary election, to post at each outside door a written notice of the date, hour, and place for the precinct convention. The judge does not have to use an officially prescribed form for the notice.

Sec. 162.004 requires a presiding judge to issue an affiliation certificate to an accepted voter who did not present a voter registration certificate.

Some have raised concerns that the notice posted at the doors of the polling place is not an efficient means of informing constituencies about party conventions and other party information.

DIGEST: CSHB 1639 would allow a political party to prepare a notice for distribution to each voter participating in the party's primary election at the time the voter was accepted for voting. The notice could not be larger than letter-size and could include:

- information describing the party's convention process;
- the time and place of the party's first level convention process;
- contact information for the county and state political parties; and
- website links for information and registration for party conventions.

The state chair of a political party would have to prescribe a form for notice that could be used in any county. County chairs could prescribe a specific notice for their county, but the same notice would have to be used in all precincts within a county. The notice would have to be supplied by a county chair to the authority conducting the election at least 30 days before the date early voting by personal appearance began.

The secretary of state would have to approve these notices and prescribe procedures and adopt rules necessary to implement the bill.

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, 2017.

NOTES: A companion bill, SB 375 by V. Taylor, was referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee on February 1.