

SUBJECT: Requiring a standardized training program for county election officers

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Cain, Bucy, Clardy, Fierro, Jetton, Schofield, Swanson

2 nays — J. González, Beckley

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 9 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: No public hearing.

BACKGROUND: Election Code ch. 32, subch. F requires the secretary of state to adopt standards of training in election law and procedure for presiding or alternate election judges, develop materials for a standardized curriculum for that training, and distribute the materials as necessary to the governing bodies of political subdivisions that hold elections and to each county executive committee of a political party that holds a primary election.

The training standards may include required attendance at appropriate training programs or the passage of an exam at the end of the program. The standards must include provisions on the acceptance and handling of the identification presented by a voter to an election officer.

On request of a county executive committee or county clerk, as appropriate, the secretary of state shall schedule and provide assistance for the training of election judges and clerks. The secretary may provide similar training assistance to other political subdivisions.

Sec. 31.091(1) defines a “county election officer” as the county elections administrator in counties having that position, the county tax assessor-collector in counties in which the county clerk’s election duties and functions have been transferred to the assessor-collector, and the county clerk in other counties.

DIGEST: SB 231 would require the secretary of state to provide a standardized

training program and materials for county elections officers in the same manner it provides such a program to election judges and clerks under Election Code ch. 32, subch. F.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 231 would ensure uniformity in elections training conducted by the secretary of state by requiring the standardized training program currently provided to presiding and alternate election judges also be provided to county elections officers. This would increase public confidence in the electoral process by ensuring that local officials in each county were properly trained in election law and procedures. Providing this training would help to avoid situations where the improper conduct of elections by county elections officials led to inaccurate vote counts.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

The House companion bill, HB 4028 by Cain, was considered by the House Elections Committee in a public hearing on April 21, reported favorably and sent to the Calendars Committee.