

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 142
By: Garcia
State Affairs
4/23/2015
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, a person who wishes to become a volunteer deputy registrar must meet certain qualifications before being appointed by the voter registrar in their county. The volunteer deputy registrar must then complete in-person training developed by the Secretary of State before registering any voters.

Counties have the burden of providing this in-person training. Due to limited resources, many counties are only able to offer these trainings a few times a month, at most. As a result, this training can be difficult for volunteers to attend and may deter them from volunteering.

Texas has one of the lowest voting turnout rates in the nation. If the training material was provided on the Secretary of State's webpage, there might be heightened interest for Texans to complete the training online and help increase voter registration in the state.

S.B. 142 addresses voter deputy registrar training standards by establishing online training materials created by the Secretary of State to be available for applicants to review online. This information is to be posted on the Secretary of State's website. Volunteer deputy registrars will be allowed to review the materials online and take an exam administered by counties, anytime during regular business hours. This proposal is permissive to counties who wish to utilize this procedure. Access to online material will provide an alternative training method to in-person trainings, making the procedure less burdensome for counties and volunteers. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 142 amends current law relating to the appointment and training of volunteer deputy registrars.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 13, Election Code, by adding Section 13.048, as follows:

Sec. 13.048. OPTIONAL PROCEDURE FOR APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEER DEPUTY REGISTRAR; PROVISION OF TRAINING MATERIALS ON SECRETARY OF STATE WEBSITE. (a) Provides that a county adopt a method of appointment for volunteer deputy registrars under this section that provides for the training and examination of potential volunteer deputy registrars.

(b) Requires the secretary of state, for the purposes of this section, to:

(1) provide on the secretary of state's website the training materials prescribed by the secretary of state under Section 13.047 (Training Standards for Deputy Registrars) for volunteer deputy registrars; and

(2) prescribe and make available on the secretary of state's website an examination based on those materials.

(c) Provides that a county that has adopted the method under this section:

(1) is required to administer the required examination to a potential volunteer deputy registrar at any time during the county voter registrar's regular business hours; and

(2) is not required to hold in-person training sessions for potential volunteer deputy registrars.

(d) Requires the registrar, at the time a person satisfactorily completes the examination in compliance with standards adopted by the secretary of state, to appoint the person as a volunteer deputy registrar and advise the person:

(1) of county-specific procedures for processing voter registration applications, if applicable; and

(2) that the only requirements for voter registration are those prescribed by state law or by the secretary of state.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.