

**SUBJECT:** Providing birth records at no cost for election identification certificate

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Crownover, Naishtat, Blanco, Guerra, R. Miller, Sheffield,  
Zedler, Zerwas

0 nays

3 absent — Coleman, Collier, S. Davis

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 11 — 31-0

**WITNESSES:** No public hearing

**BACKGROUND:** Election Code, sec. 63.001 requires a voter to present a form of identification to be able to vote. Sec. 63.0101 lists an election identification certificate as an acceptable form of photo identification.

Transportation Code, sec. 521A.001 requires the Department of Public Safety to issue an election identification certificate to a person who wishes to vote, does not have another form of acceptable photo identification required to vote, and is either registered or eligible for registration to vote. A person must provide proper verification of identity to be issued a certificate. The certificate is issued at no cost.

Health and Safety Code, sec. 191.0046 provides for certain fee exemptions for the issuance of a birth certificate. These exemptions include a certificate necessary for admission to school or to secure employment, for a veteran's widow or dependent to settle claims, and for review of a child fatality.

**DIGEST:** SB 983 would prohibit the state registrar, a local registrar, or a county clerk from charging a fee to an applicant for searching for or providing a record, including a birth certificate, if the applicant stated that the applicant was requesting the record to obtain an election identification

certificate.

The bill would entitle a local registrar or a county clerk who issued a birth record for the purpose of obtaining an election identification certificate to payment of all or a portion of the fee for that record from the Department of State Health Services that they would otherwise be entitled to retain for issuing the birth record.

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. The bill would apply only to an application for a certified copy of a birth record filed on or after the effective date.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 983 would allow an individual to obtain at no cost the proper identification required to be able to vote in Texas. Currently, Texas voters must show an acceptable photo identification to be eligible to vote. While the election identification certificate would be an appropriate photo identification, individuals must show verification of identity to receive the certificate. Obtaining verification of identity, such as a birth certificate, can require a fee. This bill would allow individuals to obtain a birth certificate to verify their identity for the election identification certificate at no cost.

The bill would not cover the cost of obtaining a birth certificate for individuals born outside of the state because the Texas Legislature cannot regulate the costs imposed by other states for birth records. This bill would cover a large majority of Texans who are eligible to vote in this state.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

SB 983 would not go far enough in addressing all of the costs that are imposed on Texans for the purpose of obtaining an election identification certificate. The bill would not address the cost that Texans who were born out of the state would have to incur for obtaining their birth certificate.