

SUBJECT: Requiring comparison of mail ballot signatures with signatures from DPS

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Cain, Clardy, Jetton, Schofield, Swanson

4 nays — J. González, Beckley, Bucy, Fierro

WITNESSES: For — Bonnie Seelig; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Gerald Welty, Convention of States; Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Brandon Moore, SREC Election Integrity Committee; Beth Biesel, Cindi Castilla, and Deana Johnston, Texas Eagle Forum; Tom Glass, Texas Election Integrity; Chad Ennis, Texas Public Policy Foundation; Robert L. Green, Travis County Republican Party Election Integrity Committee; Marcia Strickler, WilcoWeTheePeople; and 21 individuals)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Matt Simpson, ACLU of Texas; Stephanie Gomez, Common Cause Texas; Joanne Richards, Common Ground for Texans; Lon Burnam, Public Citizen; Jason Taper, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Leonard Aguilar, Texas AFL-CIO; James Slattery, Texas Civil Rights Project; Candice Matthews, Texas Coalition Of Black Democrats; Jen Ramos, Texas Democratic Party; Carisa Lopez, Texas Freedom Network; Eugene Howard and Lonzo Kerr, Texas State NAACP; Stephanie Gharakhanian, Workers Defense Action Fund; and 29 individuals)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Elizabeth Miller, Libertarian Party of Texas; Scott O’Grady, Texans for Election Integrity; Christina Adkins, Texas Secretary of State)

BACKGROUND: Election Code sec. 87.027(i) requires signature verification committees to compare the signature on each carrier envelope certificate, except those signed for a voter by a witness, with the signature on the voter’s application to determine whether the signatures are those of the voter.

Sec. 87.041(b)(2) specifies that a ballot may be accepted only if neither the voter's signature on the application nor the signature on the carrier envelope is determined by the early voting ballot board to have been executed by a person other than the voter, unless signed by a witness.

Some have called for signature verification committees to also be required to compare signatures on early voting ballots voted by mail against signatures obtained from the Department of Public Safety.

DIGEST:

HB 2321 would require signature verification committees to compare the signatures specified in Election Code sec. 87.027(i) with the signature of each voter obtained from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and on file with the county clerk or voter registrar.

In making the determination under sec. 87.041(b)(2), an early voting ballot board also would have to compare the specified signatures with each signature of the voter obtained from DPS and on file with the county clerk or voter registrar.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.