

**SUBJECT:** Raising compensation for certain polling place election workers

**COMMITTEE:** Elections — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — J. Jones, Denny, Hodge, Madden, Truitt  
0 nays  
4 absent — Danburg, Gallego, Sadler, Wilson

**WITNESSES:** For — Dana DeBeauvoir, County Clerks Legislative Committee; James Gaston, Texas Democratic Party; Russell Langley, Tarrant County Democratic Party  
Against — None  
On — Elizabeth Hanshaw, Secretary of State

**BACKGROUND:** Election Code, ch. 32, subchapter E sets the compensation for election judges or clerks at a precinct polling place at no more than \$6 per hour. Subchapter F, which governs training standards for election judges, allows the governing body of a political subdivision or the county executive committee of a political party that holds elections to adopt minimum standards for election law and procedures training. However, current law does not mandate training; it is up to the individual political subdivision. Sec. 173.005 governs state compensation for training election judges for services rendered for primary elections. The current rate also is \$6 per hour.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 2903 would amend sec. 32.0921 to allow an election judge or clerk who attended a training program under subchapter F to receive a maximum rate of \$7 per hour for services rendered for an election ordered by the governor or a county authority or a primary election.  
  
An election judge, early voting clerk, or deputy early voting clerk in charge of an early voting polling place also could receive the maximum rate of \$7 per hour while attending a public county training program. The maximum rate payable with state funds for primary election judges who attend training

programs also would be \$7 per hour.

The bill would delete the authorization of the secretary of state to deny payment of state funds to a county executive committee for training election judges or to limit the amount of payment made.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

Like many states, Texas is facing a real crisis in its ability to recruit and retain qualified election workers. Enabling individuals to make an extra dollar an hour if they agreed to training would enhance the quality of people working the polling places. They would be more knowledgeable about election law and procedures and would be able to better assist Texas voters.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute modified the original bill by changing the effective date from September 1, 2001 to September 1, 2003.

According to the bill's fiscal note, the cost in fiscal 2004-2005 would be \$2,151,208 and the same for fiscal 2006. This would increase counties' election costs from 10 percent to 26 percent for each election, depending on the size of the county and the county's current pay scale.

Several similar bills relating to increasing the compensation for election workers have been heard and left pending in the House Elections Committee: HB 1454 by Martinez Fisher, HB 2066 by Eiland, and HB 2115 by Ritter.