

SUBJECT: Requiring a feasibility study of changing voter registration online

COMMITTEE: Elections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Danburg, J. Jones, Denny, Hodge, Madden, Truitt  
0 nays  
3 absent — Gallego, Sadler, Wilson

WITNESSES: For —*Registered but did not testify*: James Gaston, Texas Democratic Party; Fred Lewis, Campaigns for People; (*On committee substitute*:) Richard C. Arellano, GetHeard.org  
  
Against — *Registered but did not testify*: Darryl Pool, Republican Party of Texas  
  
On — Dana DeBeauvoir, County Clerks Legislative Committee; *Registered but did not testify*: Eddie Esquivel, Department of Information Resources; Ann McGeehan, Secretary of State's Office

BACKGROUND: Election Code, sec. 15.021(a) requires a voter to submit a notice of incorrect or outdated voter registration information to the voter registrar. The notice must be written and signed and must include the corresponding correct information. Sec. 15.021(b) requires a voter to use a registration certificate or a registration application form as the notice, unless the voter does not have one.

DIGEST: CSHB 613 would require the secretary of state, in conjunction with the Department of Information Resources, to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of allowing registered voters to correct their voter information by digital transmission to the registrar. If the study determined that it was feasible to allow digital transmission, the voter could submit corrected information without a written, signed notice as now required. In that case, the secretary of state could adopt rules to approve technologies for submitting the information by digital transmission and to prescribe additional necessary procedures to implement the bill's provisions.

The bill would take effect January 1, 2002.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 613 would require a feasibility study to see if registered voters could update their voter information over the Internet and send the updates to their local registrars. The bill would make updating voter information much more convenient for voters. It would not apply to first-time registrants, who still would have to complete an initial application form and sign it.

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has initiated a similar program to allow people whose driver's licenses are due for renewal to go online to update their driver's license information. Drivers can update identifying information by providing the same types of information they would at the driver's license office, such as their license number, birth date, the last four digits of their Social Security number and the audit number located alongside the picture on their current license. The new information is then sent to the DPS automatically. There is no signature requirement for driver's license renewals. The study required by CSHB 613 would look at the feasibility of using the same type of system, perhaps using the DPS system or another system.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

**NOTES:**

HB 613 as filed would have authorized a county commissioners court to allow online voter registration and would have required the secretary of state to adopt rules necessary to implement such a system.