

SUBJECT: Appointing high school deputy voter registrars.

COMMITTEE: Elections — Recommended to be sent to Local & Consent

VOTE: 6 ayes — T. Smith, Anchia, Bohac, Bonnen, B. Brown, Harper-Brown
0 nays
3 absent — Pena, Allen, Heflin

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Election Code, sec. 13.046 requires each principal of a public or private high school or the principal's designee to serve as a deputy voter registrar for the county in which the school is located. Deputy registrars are authorized to distribute registration applications to 18-year old high school students and to preview and examine for completeness without the student being present.

DIGEST: HB 1654 would require each high school principal to designate four people as deputy registrars. The four deputies could be either employees of the high school or employees of the school district in which the high school was located and who were serving at the high school. At least three of the four would have to be classroom teachers or certified full-time counselors.

The bill would take effect on September 1, 2009.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Principals have been authorized to register high school seniors as voters since 1991, but this has not increased voter registration of this age group. Texas ranks 42nd in the number of 18-to-24 year olds who are registered to vote. Principals simply are too busy running their schools and often do not have enough time to devote to voter registration activities, especially in large high schools. Under current law, a principal can designate only one person as a deputy registrar.

HB 1654 would help to expand access to voter registration by allowing more people to assist in voter registration activities at Texas high schools.

It would promote civic involvement and encourage the participation of young people in the election process. It would lead to a greater awareness of election-related issues, which could lead to increased voter turnout among young people.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Some high school principals might find it difficult to designate as many as four deputy registrars, especially a smaller school. The bill's requirements should be flexible, and leave it up to the principal to decide who many additional deputy registrars the principal needs.

NOTES:

The House originally considered HB 1654 on second reading on the General State Calendar on May 1 and recommitted the bill to the Elections Committee, which reported it favorably on May 1.