

SUBJECT: Requiring designation of an incumbent on a primary ballot

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

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

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 24 — 26-4 (Ellis, Van de Putte, Williams, Zaffirini)

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — None
On — Lawrence Meyers; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Elizabeth Winn, Secretary of State)

DIGEST: SB 563 would require that for each office that appeared on a primary or runoff primary election ballot, the ballot would have to indicate, in a manner prescribed by the secretary of state, a candidate who was an incumbent.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Requiring this additional information in the ballot would be an informational plus for voters. Indicating an incumbent would be a non-partisan, educational tool that would provide transparency for the voters. It would serve as a reminder to the voters to think about whether or not the incumbent had followed through with their promises and plans.

OPPONENTS SAY: This bill is not necessary because almost all voters know who the incumbents are. It could have negative impact on every candidate on the ballot, especially if a voter had an issue with someone on the local level. By leaving candidates unlabeled, the candidates are standing on their own.