

**SUBJECT:** Expanding grounds for terminating a volunteer deputy registrar

**COMMITTEE:** Elections — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Laubenberg, Goldman, Fallon, Phelan, Reynolds, Schofield

0 nays

1 absent — Israel

**WITNESSES:** For — Jacquelyn Callanen, Bexar County Elections Administrator, Texas Association of Elections Administrators; Linda Bridge, Tax Assessor Collector Association; John Oldham, Texas Association of Elections Administrators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Willie O'Brien, Mountain View College Student Government Association; Ro'Vin Garrett, Tax Collectors Association of Texas; Nanette Forbes, Texas Association of Counties; Erin Anderson, True the Vote; John Hobson; Karen Hobson; Carol Kitson)

Against — Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; William Fairbrother, Texas Republican County Chairmen's Association; Zenobia Joseph; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rachael Crider, Galveston County Tax Office; Sheryl Swift, Galveston County Tax Office; Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Bruce Elfant)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ashley Fischer, Office of the Secretary of State; Keith Ingram, Texas Secretary of State, Elections Division)

**BACKGROUND:** Under Election Code, ch. 13, volunteer deputy registrars are appointed by county registrars to encourage voter registration. Volunteer deputy registrars may distribute voter registration application forms throughout the county and receive registration applications submitted to the deputy in person.

Current law allows a county registrar to terminate a volunteer deputy

registrar appointment if the deputy failed to adequately review a registration application.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 621 would allow a county registrar to terminate the appointment of a volunteer deputy registrar on a determination by the registrar that the volunteer deputy intentionally destroyed or physically altered a registration application or engaged in any other activity that conflicted with the responsibilities of a volunteer deputy registrar. The bill also would require that a certificate of appointment for a volunteer deputy registrar state that the volunteer deputy's appointment could be terminated for these additional reasons.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 621 is necessary to protect the process of voter registration from volunteer deputy registrars who do not fulfill their responsibilities. The increased authority for county registrars to terminate deputies would ensure that volunteer deputy registrars who falsified registrations, physically altered or destroyed applications, turned in applications late, or misrepresented their positions were not allowed to continue to damage the voter registration process.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** CSHB 621 is vague and overly broad and could be used by registrars to disqualify volunteer deputy registrars on political grounds. If registrars were given broad discretion to terminate volunteer deputy registrars, they could inhibit voter registration. Any expansion of the ability of registrars to terminate volunteer deputy registrars should state the specific conduct that could lead to termination.

Current law already allows registrars to terminate volunteer deputy registrars who do not adequately review a registration application or fail to turn in an application. That provision is sufficient to cover most of the problems that arise from volunteer deputy registrars.