

SUBJECT: Renewing volunteer deputy registrar appointments and forgoing training

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Klick, Cortez, Bucy, Burrows, Cain, Fierro, Israel, Middleton, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Sabra Srader, Texas Association of Elections Administrators; Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; Brandon Moore; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Amanda Gnaedinger, Common Cause Texas; Joanne Richards, Common Ground for Texans; Cinde Weatherby, League of Women Voters of Texas; Lon Burnam, Public Citizen; Karen Collins; Ed Johnson; Crystal Main)

Against — Kay Tyner; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Kathaleen Wall, Republican Party of Texas State Republican Executive Committee Election Integrity Working Group)

On — Christina Adkins, Secretary of State; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Heather Hawthorne, County and District Clerks Association of Texas; Jenifer Favreau, Texas Association of Elections Administrators)

BACKGROUND: Election Code sec. 13.031 requires county voter registrars to appoint volunteer deputy registrars to encourage voter registration. In order to be eligible to serve as a volunteer deputy registrar, a person must:

- be at least 18;
- not have been finally convicted of a felony or, if convicted, have been fully discharged, completed a period of probation, been pardoned, or otherwise released from the disability to vote;
- be a qualified voter; and
- not have been finally convicted of the fraudulent use or possession

of identifying information.

Volunteer deputy registrars serve for terms expiring December 31 of even-numbered years, and they must complete a training program before they can begin their duties.

Sec. 13.047 requires the secretary of state to develop the program used to train volunteer deputy registrars in election law related to the registration of voters and to distribute the necessary materials to each county voter registrar.

DIGEST:

HB 529 would require county voter registrars to notify volunteer deputy registrars by November 30 of even-numbered years that their terms would expire on December 31 of that year.

Notices could be delivered by mail or email, and would have to be accompanied by a renewal application and information about any changes in election law that were relevant to the role of a volunteer deputy registrar and that had occurred during the volunteer deputy registrar's term of appointment.

Voter registrars would be required to immediately appoint volunteer deputy registrars to a new term beginning on the next January 1 if the volunteer deputy registrars:

- signed the renewal application and returned it to the voter registrar before the volunteer deputy registrar's term expired;
- signed an affidavit confirming that the volunteer deputy registrar had read and understood the information about changes in election law, if applicable; and
- remained eligible for appointment as a volunteer deputy registrar under current requirements.

Volunteer deputy registrars appointed to a new term would not be required to attend training unless they failed to comply with any requirements imposed on them.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 529 would allow voter registrars to waive the time-consuming training requirement for certain volunteer deputy registrars who had been determined not to need additional training. Some volunteer deputy registrars have served for several years and do not need repeated or additional training. The option to waive training for these individuals could allow election officials to spend more time preparing for elections instead of conducting unnecessary instruction.

Voter registrars still would be allowed to require training for volunteer deputy registrars if there were changes to election law or if they determined that a volunteer deputy registrar needed additional training.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 529 would remove a training requirement that is necessary to help volunteer deputy registrars understand complex and ever-changing election laws. Volunteer deputy registrars should receive training annually to avoid confusion during elections.