

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 983
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State Affairs
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In order to vote in elections in Texas, the law requires most citizens (some, such as people with disabilities, can be exempt) to show one of a handful of allowable photo identifications before their votes can be counted. Acceptable forms include a state driver's license or ID card that is not more than 60 days expired at the time of voting, a concealed handgun license, a United States passport, a military ID card, or a U.S citizenship certificate with a photo.

Experts say more than 600,000 Texans lack such identification. Those citizens can obtain "election identification certificates" free of charge, but must present a copy of their birth certificate. Searching for and obtaining copies of birth certificates can cost between \$2 and \$47.

S.B. 983 will allow those wanting to vote the ability to receive a copy of their birth certificate free of charge by showing up in person to the state registrar, local registrar, or county clerk and stating that the birth certificate will be used for obtaining an election identification certificate. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 983 amends current law relating to restrictions on the assessment of the fee charged for issuance of certain birth records.

[**Note:** While the statutory reference in this bill is to the Texas Department of Health (TDH), the following amendments affect the Department of State Health Services, as the successor agency to TDH.]

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 191.0046, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subsections (e) and (f), as follows:

(e) Provides that it is the intent of the legislature to not impose a cost for obtaining certified records for the purpose of obtaining an election identification certificate issued pursuant to Chapter 521A (Election Identification Certificate), Transportation Code. Prohibits the state registrar, a local registrar, or a county clerk, notwithstanding any other law, from charging a fee to an applicant that is associated with searching for or providing a record, including a certified copy of a birth record, if the applicant states that the applicant is requesting the record for the purpose of obtaining an election identification certificate under Section 521A.001 (Election Identification Certificate), Transportation Code.

(f) Entitles a local registrar or a county clerk who issues a birth record that is required for the purpose of obtaining an election identification certificate issued pursuant to Chapter 521A, Transportation Code, and is otherwise entitled by law to retain all or a portion of a fee for that birth record, notwithstanding Subsection (e), to payment of the amount from the Texas Department of Health.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.