

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 478
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Elections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Registered voters unable to physically enter polling places due to a disability or without risking their health have expressed concerns about difficulties accessing their ballot at the curbside of established polling places due to unclear instructions or inconsistencies. C.S.H.B. 478 seeks to address this issue by requiring a parking spot at each polling place to be designated and clearly marked for voters unable to physically enter the polling place.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 478 amends the Election Code to require an election officer to designate a parking space at each polling place for a voter who is physically unable to enter the polling place without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring the voter's health. The bill prohibits the parking space from being one designated specifically for persons with disabilities and requires the parking space to be clearly marked with a sign that displays the following:

- an indication that the space is reserved for use by a voter who is unable to enter the polling place; and
- a telephone number, in large font that is clearly readable from a vehicle, that a voter may call or text to request assistance from an election officer at the polling place.

As an alternative to displaying the telephone number, a parking space may meet the bill's requirements by providing the voter with a button or intercom to use to request assistance from an election officer.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 478 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes requirements absent from the original for the designated parking space clearly marked for use by an applicable voter to be marked with a sign indicating that the space is reserved for such a voter and either displaying a telephone number or providing a button or intercom that the voter may use to request assistance from an election officer.