

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 661  
By: Beckley  
Elections  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Under current law, only counties that use direct recording electronic voting machines are permitted to apply to the secretary of state for participation in the countywide polling place program. The program, also known as Vote Centers, allows voters to vote at any polling place within their county. Without the ability to apply to participate in the program, it has been suggested that Texans in some counties are denied equal access to their right to vote. C.S.H.B. 661 seeks to address this issue by expanding eligibility criteria for participation in the program.

### **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. 661 amends the Election Code to expand eligibility criteria for participation in the countywide polling place program to include counties that use ballot marking devices, hand-marked scannable paper ballots that are printed and scanned at the polling place, or any other voting system equipment the secretary of state determines is capable of processing votes for each type of ballot to be voted in the county, in addition to meeting other eligibility requirements.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

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

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 661 differs from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways by conforming to certain bill drafting conventions.