

**SUBJECT:** Updating voter registrations

**COMMITTEE:** Elections — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — Danburg, J. Jones, Denny, Galloway, Hodge, Isett, Madden  
0 nays  
2 absent — Gallego, Place

**WITNESSES:** For — Bruce Sherbert; Texas Association of Election Administrators; John Willingham, Williamson County Election Administrator  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Barbara Brinkmeyer, County Tax Assessor-Collectors; Andrea Gibbud, Tax Assessor-Collectors Association of Texas; Melinda Nickless, Secretary of State

**BACKGROUND :** County registrars who receive voter registration applications are required to annually compile information on the number of applications certified and registrations canceled in the previous year. Registrars are paid 40 cents for each entry.  
  
Voter registration may be cancelled if another state provides notice that the person has registered to vote in that state.  
  
Persons obtaining or renewing drivers' licenses from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) may simultaneously register to vote. Persons changing names and addresses on the licenses also may indicate that the information be used to change information on voter registration forms.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1852 would amend the voter registration provisions of the Election Code to provide for updating information on voter rolls. Voter application forms would have to indicate whether an applicant was submitting new information or changing current information. DPS employees would have to ensure that application forms submitted to them include the applicant's

correct driver's license number or personal identification card number and correct residence and mailing address.

County registrars would have to cancel voter registrations upon notice from the Secretary of State's Office that the person had registered to vote in another county. The office would make that determination based on the voter's social security number or license or personal ID number issued by DPS. Registrars would have to include in their annual compilation of information the total number of registrations for which information was updated. Registrars would receive 40 cents for each updated registration. The amount provided for new registrations would be reduced to 25 cents.

CSHB 1852 also would provide that a registration application due on a weekend or legal state or national holiday would be considered timely if it reached the registrar on the next regular business day. Voter registration application would have to be submitted in person or by mail. A registrar could not record a social security number on an application.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 1852 would protect the integrity of Texas' electoral and political processes. Duplicate voter registrations severely undermine the democratic process as voters could be registered in a variety of counties or under a variety of names. The bill's provisions would alert the secretary of state to many such duplications and require counties to cancel voter registrations upon notice that individuals had registered in another county.

The way voter registrars are compensated for registering voters provides incentive to register new voters, but not to update the information of voters already registered. CSHB 1852 would provide not only the means but also the financial incentive for registrars to keep voter rolls current and prevent duplication.

Texas already cancels voters' registration when notice arrives from other states, and CSHB 1852 would simply extend this process to counties across the state. Texas needs such a provision to assure all citizens that its electoral procedures are fair and results accurate.

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**OPPONENTS SAY:** CSHB 1852 would not go far enough to address duplication of voter registration. Registration applications should include optional spaces for voters' drivers license numbers. The great majority of voters have drivers' licences and would have no problem providing the information, which would greatly simplify the process of discovering duplicate registrations.

**NOTES:** The committee substitute deleted a requirement that voter registration applications contain spaces for drivers license numbers, decreased the payment for new registrations to 25 cents and added the payment of 40 cents for updated registrations. The substitute also added the requirement that applications contain spaces for indicating whether new or updated voter registration information was being provided, and required registrars to cancel a registration if notified that the voter had registered in another county.