SUBJECT:	Changes in voter registration procedures
COMMITTEE:	Elections — committee substitute recommended
VOTE:	6 ayes — Danburg, J. Jones, Averitt, Denny, Greenberg, Madden
	0 nays
	3 absent — Gallego, Hodge, Uher
WITNESSES:	For — Bill Borden, Harris County Republican Party; Mary Ann Collins, Republican Party of Texas; George Hammerlein, Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office; Ed Johnson and Marty Morrison, Harris County Tax Office, Voter Registration Department; Steve McDonald, Texas Democratic Party; Sherwin Roden, WC Management
	Against — None
	On — Larry Cuny and Kim Smith, Department of Public Safety; Ro'Vin Garret, Tax Assessor-Collector's Association of Texas and Brazoria County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office; Elizabeth Hanshaw, Melinda Nickless, and Terry Vickers, Secretary of State's Office; J.R. Perez, Texas Association of Election Administrators; Mary Alice Winfree, Texas Department of Health
DIGEST:	**Voter registration application.** Effective January 1, 2000, CSHB 1699 would:

- exclude from public disclosure requirements the telephone number and social security number furnished on a voter registration application; and
- prohibit the word "optional" from appearing in the spaces on the application provided for the applicant's driver's license number, personal identification card number, telephone number, or social security number, and instead require the application form to specify that the omission of this information would not affect the validity of the application.

Public access to voter rolls. CSHB 1699 would require a list of registered voters to include the voter's mailing address in addition to other information now required. The registrar would have to furnish copies of voter registration

rolls to those who requested them even if the registrar had contracted with a private business to manage the information on the rolls.

Voter registration agencies. CSHB 1699 would require designated voter registration agencies to deliver a voter registration application to the registrar by 5 p.m. of the 29th day before an election if the application was submitted after the 34th day and before the 29th day before the election.

If an applicant for a driver's license or personal identification card completed a voter registration form supplied by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) under the motor-voter law, a temporary driver's license or identification card could serve as a temporary voter identification card for purposes of voting in an election. This change would take effect January 1, 2000, by which time DPS would have to prescribe a temporary license form and a temporary personal identification certificate form conforming to the changes.

Voter death confirmation. CSHB 1699 would require a voter registrar who learned, by a means not prescribed by law, of a voter's death to send a confirmation request to the voter's address. The confirmation request would have to include:

- a section that a relative could sign and return within 30 days confirming the death;
- a section that the voter would have to sign and return within 30 days notifying the registrar that the death was incorrect;
- a notice that if confirmation was not received within 30 days, the voter might have to sign an affidavit to vote; and
- a warning that voter registration would be subject to cancellation if confirmation were not received before November 30 following the second general election for state and county officers that occurred after the postmarked date on the confirmation request.

The bill would require a voter who received a death confirmation request to notify the registrar within 30 days that the record of death was incorrect.

Mandatory electronic reporting. CSHB 1699 would require the secretary of state to develop procedures to implement electronic reporting of the information required of county voter registrars. This change would apply to

voter registration information from elections held on or after November 2, 1999. Registration information from elections between November 2, 1999, and March 31, 2000, would have to be reported to the secretary of state by April 15, 2000.

Required reporting. In addition to information required by current law, county reports would have to include a voter's participation history in primary and general elections. The participation history would include only that the voter had voted in a particular election and whether the voter had voted by mail or in person. The secretary of state would have to prescribe procedures to implement a statewide standardized coding system for voter history information by January 1, 2001.

The bill would require each voter registrar to report required information to the secretary of state before the 16th of February, April, June, September, and December of each year. Current law specifies January and March instead of February and April.

Voter registration service program. CSHB 1699 would require the secretary of state to help registrars ascertain the history of each registered voter's participation in primary and general elections and to provide registrars with updated information to help them maintain accurate lists of registered voters. The secretary or a county could acquire by any method the hardware and software necessary to support electronic data services.

Felony convictions. The bill would require DPS, rather than the clerk of each court having felony jurisdiction, to report to the appropriate voter registrar the convicted felons whose addresses were listed in that county.

Address standardization feasibility study. CSHB 1699 would instruct the secretary of state to study and report on the feasibility of developing a standardized electronic format for entering voters' residence addresses. The report, including a review of U.S. Postal Service-approved software for address standardization, would have to be delivered to the governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2000.

Except as otherwise noted, this bill would take effect September 1, 1999.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 1699 would help voter registrars keep voter rolls up-to-date and clean. It would establish a more standardized system to provide the secretary of state and voter registrars with consistent and accurate voter information. It would encourage voters to supply the optional information requested for better record-keeping. It would lay the groundwork for later legislation to improve address standardization to eliminate duplicate voter registrations. It would provide for better communication between voter registration agencies and voter registrars to give the voter registrar a steady stream of work in adjusting voter rolls before an election crunch time. Finally, the bill would close a loophole in the public information law that allows access to confidential information such as social security numbers.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The bill's fiscal note indicates a general revenue cost of almost $400,000 for fiscal 2000 and about $65,000 each year thereafter. DPS would have to hire one additional employee. All costs estimated by the fiscal note are related to the bill's technology requirements.

CSHB 1699 includes provisions that also appear in HB 308 by Madden, HB 339 by Madden, HB 1140 by Thompson, and HB 1566 by Maxey. HB 1140, relating to notice to voter registrars concerning persons convicted of a felony, passed the House on the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar on May 11. The other three bills have been left pending in the House Elections Committee.