

SUBJECT: Modifying eligibility to be a candidate for or serve as an officer of a party

COMMITTEE: Elections — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Cain, Clardy, Jetton, Schofield, Swanson

4 nays — J. González, Beckley, Bucy, Fierro

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Alicia Bell, Grassroots Gold; Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Marty Rhymes, Republican Club of Gregg County; Christina Drewry, Texas Nationalist Movement; Karen Brooks, Justin Ead, Terry Lynch, Fran Rhodes, Rebecca Rodgers, and Candelario Torres, True Texas Project; Manfred Wendt, Young Conservatives of Texas; Jordan Clements, Young Conservatives of Texas-UT; and 26 individuals)

Against — Wes Benedict; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rene Perez, Libertarian Party of Texas; Elizabeth Miller, Libertarian Party of Texas, SdD10; Rosemarie Clouston and Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; and 16 individuals)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Christina Adkins, Texas Secretary of State; Robert L. Green, Travis County Republican Party Election Integrity Committee)

BACKGROUND: Under Election Code sec. 161.005(a), to be eligible to be a candidate for or to serve as a county or precinct chair of a political party, a person must be a qualified voter of the county and not be a candidate for nomination or election to, or be the holder of, an elective office of the federal, state, or county government. Sec. 161.005(c) exempts county or precinct chairs of political parties with state organizations that nominate by convention from these requirements.

DIGEST: HB 1987 would specify that the requirements in Election Code sec. 161.005(a) applied to the eligibility to be a candidate for or to serve as an officer, not just a county or precinct chair, of a political party. The bill

would retain the requirement that a person be a qualified voter of the county to be eligible to be a candidate for or to serve as a county or precinct chair.

The bill would repeal the exception to sec. 161.005(a) for county or precinct chairs of parties with state organizations that nominate by convention.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021, and would apply only to a candidate for nomination or election to an office the term of which began on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1987 would provide parity between local and state political party officials and treat political parties in the state equally by standardizing the requirements to serve as a party officer. This would help to ensure that parties in Texas were controlled by the grassroots at all levels, not by the elected officials from those parties. The bill would not seek to punish third parties that nominate by convention, but would simply apply the same standards to all political parties in Texas.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 1987 would unfairly disadvantage third parties by removing the ability of individuals affiliated with parties that nominate by convention to simultaneously serve in the party and run for office. Third parties that nominate by convention have fewer individuals available to serve as officials and run for office on the party ticket. The bill would make it even more difficult for these parties to field candidates by removing their exemption from the Election Code.