

**SUBJECT:** Expanding cybersecurity council to include elections official

**COMMITTEE:** State Affairs — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 11 ayes — Paddie, Hernandez, Deshotel, Harless, Howard, Hunter, P. King, Lucio, Raymond, Slawson, Smithee

0 nays

2 absent — Metcalf, Shaheen

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 8 — 30-0

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** Government Code sec. 2054.512 requires the state cybersecurity coordinator to lead a council of public and private sector leaders and cybersecurity practitioners to collaborate and provide recommendations on cybersecurity matters. The council includes one employee of the Office of the Governor, one senator, one House member, and additional members appointed by the coordinator.

**DIGEST:** SB 851 would expand the membership of the cybersecurity council to include an employee from the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 851 would help maintain election security by adding an employee of the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State as a member of the cybersecurity council. The risk of cyberattacks compromising voter databases and election systems has increased in recent years as more systems are managed in digital formats.

Currently, the Office of the Secretary of State does not have an in-house cybersecurity specialist nor does it have formal relationships with the

Department of Information Resources (DIR) or state cybersecurity officials to collaborate on issues that impact elections. DIR currently houses the cybersecurity council through which representatives from state agencies and others experts collaborate and provide recommendations on cybersecurity matters that affect the state. By adding an elections official to the cybersecurity council, the bill would help ensure state election officials were better informed about potential cyberattacks and increase the flow of information between those officials and cybersecurity experts.

CRITICS  
SAY:

No concerns identified.

NOTES:

The House companion bill, HB 2065 by Dominguez, was considered by the House State Affairs Committee in a public hearing on April 1, reported favorably on April 6, and placed on the General State Calendar for May 12.