

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 758
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State Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Historically, elections have been conducted based on polling places found within particular precincts. Voters are assigned precincts according to their residence address. Although current law authorizes voters to vote at any of the conveniently located polling places during the early voting period, those voters who wish to cast their ballot on election day are required to return to their assigned polling location. This can create problems, as many individuals, especially those who work in a different area from where they live, find themselves away from their precinct on election day. With the advent of computer technology, including Direct Record Electronic voting machines and computerized voter registration databases, the administration of countywide polling locations has become more feasible. Holding elections at countywide polling locations would not only ease the burden on voters but would potentially reduce election costs, as well as the required number of trained poll workers.

H.B. 758 requires the secretary of state to implement a pilot program to evaluate the use of countywide polling places for the general election.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 43, Election Code, by adding Section 43.007, as follows:

Sec. 43.007. COUNTYWIDE POLLING PLACE PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the secretary of state to implement a pilot program to evaluate the use of countywide polling places as specified.

(b) Requires the commissioners court of a county that desires to participate in the pilot program authorized by this section to hold a public hearing on the county's participation in the program and submit a transcript or electronic recording of the commentary made at the hearing as specified. Authorizes the secretary of state to consider public comments when selecting counties to participate in the pilot program.

(c) Requires the secretary of state to provide for an audit of the direct recording electronic voting units as specified, in conducting the pilot program.

(d) Requires the secretary of state to select one or more counties which have met certain criteria to participate in the pilot program.

(e) Requires the secretary of state to file a report concluding certain information with the legislature within a specified period of time.

(f) Provides that this section expires on January 2, 2007.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2005.