

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1199
By: Patrick
State Affairs
3/29/2011
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Presently, under federal law (National Voting Rights Act), Harris County is required to provide election materials in three languages: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Due to preliminary results of the 2010 census, there is a chance that Harris County will be responsible for Mandarin and Hindi as well. Due to this law, Harris County may be required to provide election materials in up to five different languages. Requiring the elections department to send out the ballot by mail applications (BBM), as well as the ballot, in five different languages is costly and wasteful.

S.B. 1199 requires that, at the top of the BBM application in all the languages required by law, the application will also include a box to select the language in which to receive the ballot. The application will also indicate that if no language is selected, the language will be English. The applicant will then receive the ballot and instructions for the ballot in the language selected, or if no selection is made, in the default language. This will result in not only less clutter and confusion for the voter when receiving the ballot, but also lower printing costs for the elections department.

As proposed, S.B. 1199 amends current law relating to a ballot by mail single language requirement.

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 Section 84.011(a), Elections Code, by adding Subsection (4-I), to require that the officially prescribed application form for an early voting ballot include a box for the applicant to choose a language that they would prefer the ballot to be printed along with a notice that if the applicant fails to choose, then the ballot will be delivered in English.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.