

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 2570
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

When a voter registration application is rejected, H.B. 2570 requires the voter registrar to specifically identify what part of an application resulted in the rejection. H.B. 2570 requires that the applicant be told if a specific section was incomplete, improperly filled out, or contained information showing the applicant as ineligible to vote.

Currently, statute requires a registrar to provide the reason for the rejection of an application in writing or verbally if the rejection is done in the applicant's presence but not for mail-in voter registration applications. This has resulted in applicants being provided non-specific information by some voter registrars and made it difficult for the applicants to correctly re-apply for voter registration.

Voter registration compliance continues to be an obstacle for individuals who desire to participate in the voting process and the voter registration rejection letter an applicant receives from the voter registrar is vague. Applicants often do not understand the nature of the registration problem and are unable to reconcile the problem. When the applicant fills out another application, it may also be rejected because the applicant was unaware of the specific problem that needed to be resolved.

To address this issue, H.B. 2570 seeks to require the voter registrar's office to provide specific information to a voter whose voter registration is rejected.

H.B. 2570 also addresses training standards for deputy registrars by establishing website training materials created by the Secretary of State for applicants to download and complete online. This will provide an alternative training method for deputy registrars other than in person trainings, which will benefit counties with limited staff time to conduct in-person trainings.

Volunteer Deputy Registrars must be eligible, execute the affidavit with an original signature, and pass an examination.

H.B. 2570 amends current law relating to voter registration and creates an offense.

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 13.073, Election Code, by adding Subsections (d) and (e), as follows:

(d) Requires the registrar, in providing a written or oral reason for rejection under Subsection (a) (relating to requiring the registrar, except as provided by Subsection (b), to deliver written notice of the reason for the rejection of an application to the applicant not later than the second day after the date of rejection) or (b) (relating to requiring the registrar, if the registrar rejects an application in the applicant's presence, at that time to orally inform the applicant of the reason for the rejection), to identify which section or

sections of the application resulted in the rejection. Requires the registrar, for each section identified, to specify if the section was incomplete, was improperly filled out, or contained information identifying the applicant as ineligible to vote.

(e) Requires the registrar to work to lower error rates in applications by following the training standards for deputy voter registrars as set out in Section 13.047.

SECTION 2. Amends the heading to Section 13.047, Election Code, to read as follows:

Sec. 13.047. TRAINING STANDARDS FOR DEPUTY REGISTRARS; TRAINING USING MATERIALS POSTED ON THE SECRETARY OF STATE WEBSITE.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 13.047, Election Code, by adding Subsections (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), and (i), as follows:

(c) Requires the secretary of state (SOS) to provide on SOS's website the training materials and, if applicable, the examination that a potential volunteer deputy registrar is authorized to access at any time.

(d) Requires that the materials posted online and described by Subsection (c) allow an applicant to download and print a document to be used as a certificate of completion of training. Requires that the document:

(1) provide for the applicant to include the applicant's name, county, and residence address and any other information SOS considers necessary;

(2) include the examination questions, if required by SOS; and

(3) contain a form on which the applicant is authorized to execute an affidavit affirming that the applicant has read the training materials in their entirety.

(e) Provides that a person commits an offense if the person knowingly makes a false statement or requests, commands, or attempts to induce another person to make a false statement on an affidavit completed as part of a certificate of completion. Provides that an offense under this subsection is a Class B misdemeanor.

(f) Requires an applicant who completes the training materials and a certificate of completion to present the certificate to the registrar at the time the applicant requests appointment as a volunteer deputy registrar. Provides that, upon appointment, the applicant is not required to take further training and is authorized to immediately receive another person's voter registration application.

(g) Requires the registrar to accept a certificate of completion presented by an applicant and appoint the person as a volunteer deputy registrar if the applicant:

(1) is eligible to be appointed as a volunteer deputy registrar under this subchapter (Volunteer Deputy Registrars; High School Deputy Registrars);

(2) has executed the affidavit with an original signature; and

(3) has passed the examination, if applicable.

(h) Requires the registrar, at the time a volunteer deputy registrar who received training is appointed, to advise the volunteer:

(1) of county-specific procedures for processing voter registration applications, if applicable; and

(2) that the only requirements for voter registration are those prescribed by state law or by SOS.

(i) Authorizes a volunteer deputy registrar requesting appointment in an additional county to present the person's valid certificate of appointment as proof of training. Provides that the volunteer is eligible to receive another person's voter registration application immediately on receiving a certificate of appointment from the registrar of the additional county.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.