

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 142
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, a person who wishes to become a volunteer deputy registrar must meet certain qualifications before being appointed by the voter registrar in their county. The volunteer deputy registrar must then complete in-person training developed by the Secretary of State before registering any voters.

Counties have the burden of providing this in-person training. Due to limited resources, many counties are only able to offer these trainings a few times a month, at most. As a result, this training can be difficult for volunteers to attend and may deter them from volunteering.

Texas has one of the lowest voting turnout rates in the nation. If the training material was provided on the Secretary of State's webpage, there might be heightened interest for Texans to complete the training online and help increase voter registration in the state.

S.B. 142 addresses voter deputy registrar training standards by establishing online training materials created by the Secretary of State to be available for applicants to download and complete online. This information is to be posted on the Secretary of State's website. Volunteer deputy registrars must be eligible, execute an affidavit with an original signature, and pass an examination. Access to online material will provide an alternative training method to in-person trainings, making the procedure less burdensome for counties and volunteers.

As proposed, S.B. 142 amends current law relating to the appointment and training of volunteer deputy registrars 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 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 SECRETARY OF STATE WEBSITE.

SECTION 2. 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 to provide on the agency's website the training materials and, if applicable, the examination that a potential volunteer deputy registrar may 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 the secretary of state considers necessary;

(2) include the examination questions, if required by the secretary of state; and

(3) contain a form on which the applicant may 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 may 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 is eligible to be appointed as a volunteer deputy registrar under this subchapter, has executed the affidavit with an original signature, and 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 of county-specific procedures for processing voter registration applications, if applicable, and that the only requirements for voter registration are those prescribed by state law or by the secretary of state.

(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 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.