BILL ANALYSIS

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Voters who wish to request vote by mail have several options for acquiring their ballot; they complete an online request, mail in a request, or send in a prepopulated form sent to them by a candidate for office. While this system has increased the ability of seniors and other qualified mail-in ballot voters to cast their vote, one major flaw causes confusion and large amounts of duplicate work for elections administrators.

Often, voters who receive multiple prepopulated mail-in ballot request forms will send multiple requests. When a duplicate request is received, elections administrators must cancel the original ballot and send a new one, even if all the information on the new request is identical to the old. Additionally, voters have the option to request mail-in ballots for the rest of the calendar year, so they may already be set to receive a ballot from a previous application, yet the elections officials will still be required to cancel and reissue a ballot.

This leads to needless confusion and complication, and makes it more difficult to request and properly cast a mail-in ballot in Texas.

S.B. 1820 amends Section 86.001, Election Code, to specify that if the clerk has previously provided an applicant with an official ballot for a given election, the clerk must deliver written notice to the applicant that states a mail-in ballot was previously provided to the applicant and the date it was issued.

By allowing the original ballot to also fulfil the duplicate request, election administrators can reduce redundant issuing of ballots, which can result in a voter mailing their vote on a canceled ballot. This change will reduce mail-in ballot request redundancy significantly, ensuring that mail-in voters can vote with certainty that their ballot has been counted.

As proposed, S.B. 1820 amends current law relating to a duplicate application for a ballot to be voted by mail.

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 86.001, Election Code, by amending Subsections (b) and (g) and adding Subsection (b-1), as follows:

> (b) Creates an exception under Subsection (b-1).

> (b-1) Requires the clerk to, if the clerk has previously provided the applicant with an official ballot for the election for which the applicant requests a ballot, deliver written notice to the applicant, at both the residence address and the mailing address on the application, that states certain information.

(g) Deletes the exception that the form of the list of registered voters makes it impracticable to do so.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2017.