

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 69

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Redistricting Commission.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. The heading to Title 5, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

TITLE 5. OPEN GOVERNMENT; ETHICS; REDISTRICTING

SECTION 2. Title 5, Government Code, is amended by adding Subtitle C to read as follows:

SUBTITLE C. REDISTRICTING

CHAPTER 581. TEXAS REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 581.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Census year" means a calendar year in which the United States decennial census is taken.

(2) "Commission" means the Texas Redistricting Commission.

SUBCHAPTER B. POWERS AND DUTIES

Sec. 581.051. POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMISSION. The commission has the sole responsibility to create districts for the election of members of the United States House of Representatives, the Texas House of Representatives, and the Texas Senate.

SUBCHAPTER C. MEMBERSHIP

Sec. 581.101. ELIGIBILITY. (a) Except as otherwise

1 provided by this subchapter, a Texas voter who is older than 25
2 years of age is eligible for membership on the commission.

3 (b) An applicant for appointment to the commission must
4 submit an application to the secretary of state.

5 (c) An applicant for appointment by members of the
6 legislature belonging to a political party must have voted in that
7 party's previous four primary elections. An applicant for
8 appointment as an independent member may not have voted
9 consecutively in the same political party's primary election during
10 the previous three primary elections.

11 (d) An applicant is ineligible for membership on the
12 commission if the applicant:

13 (1) holds a public office;

14 (2) has held a public office in the four years
15 preceding appointment to the commission;

16 (3) is running for public office;

17 (4) is working under an elected official;

18 (5) is working for a political campaign for state or
19 federal office; or

20 (6) is a registered state or federal lobbyist.

21 (e) A commission member may not:

22 (1) run for public office during the member's term;

23 (2) run for public office during the two years
24 following the adoption of a redistricting plan by the commission;

25 (3) work under an elected official during the member's
26 term;

27 (4) work for or contribute to a campaign for state or

1 federal office during the member's term; or

2 (5) register as a state or federal lobbyist during the
3 member's term.

4 Sec. 581.102. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS. (a) The commission
5 consists of nine members chosen from eligible applicants under
6 Section 581.101.

7 (b) Eight members of the commission shall be appointed in a
8 bipartisan manner by the legislature, as follows:

9 (1) two members are appointed by a majority vote of the
10 members of the Texas House of Representatives belonging to the
11 political party with the most members in the house of
12 representatives;

13 (2) two members are appointed by a majority vote of the
14 members of the Texas House of Representatives belonging to the
15 political party with the second highest number of members in the
16 house of representatives;

17 (3) two members are appointed by a majority vote of the
18 members of the Texas Senate belonging to the political party with
19 the most members in the senate; and

20 (4) two members are appointed by a majority vote of the
21 members of the Texas Senate belonging to the political party with
22 the second highest number of members in the senate.

23 (c) The ninth member of the commission shall be chosen from
24 among the independent applicants by the eight members appointed by
25 the legislature. The appointment requires at least five votes and
26 shall be made not later than the 30th day after the commission
27 convenes. The ninth member serves as a nonvoting presiding

1 officer, except that the member shall vote to break any tie vote on
2 the final adoption of a redistricting plan.

3 (d) At least one member of the commission chosen by members
4 of each chamber of the legislature must reside in a county that is
5 not part of a metropolitan statistical area as defined by the United
6 States Office of Management and Budget.

7 (e) Commission members serve three-year terms that begin on
8 February 1 of the year following the census year. The commission may
9 vote to:

10 (1) terminate their terms early and dissolve following
11 the adoption of all redistricting plans; or

12 (2) extend their terms as necessary to fulfill the
13 commission's obligations under the constitution.

14 (f) The commission shall convene on the first business day
15 in February of the year following the census year and at other times
16 necessary to fulfill its obligations under the constitution.

17 (g) Vacancies on the commission shall be filled not later
18 than the 20th day after the vacancy occurs in the same manner as the
19 vacated position is filled under Subsections (b) and (c).

20 (h) If the appointments under Subsection (b) are not made by
21 February 1 of the year following the census year, the caucus of the
22 political party whose members are responsible for the appointment
23 shall appoint the commission member not later than February 11. If
24 the commission fails to appoint its presiding officer when
25 required, the supreme court shall make the appointment not later
26 than March 15.

27 (i) Members of the commission must take a constitutional

1 oath of office.

2 SUBCHAPTER D. OPERATION OF THE COMMISSION

3 Sec. 581.151. FUNDING AND RESOURCES. (a) The legislature
4 shall appropriate sufficient money for the compensation and payment
5 of the expenses of commission members and any staff employed by the
6 commission.

7 (b) The commission shall be provided access to statistical
8 or other information compiled by the state or its political
9 subdivisions as necessary to perform the commission's duties.

10 (c) The Texas Legislative Council shall provide the
11 technical staff and clerical services that the commission needs to
12 prepare redistricting plans.

13 (d) After the commission suspends operations, the secretary
14 of state becomes the custodian of its official records for purposes
15 of election administration. Any unexpended money from an
16 appropriation to the commission reverts to the general revenue
17 fund.

18 Sec. 581.152. PROCEDURE. (a) The commission shall adopt
19 its own procedural rules. The adoption of a final redistricting
20 plan by the commission requires at least five votes.

21 (b) The commission shall adopt each redistricting plan not
22 later than November 15 of the year following the census year.

23 (c) If the commission does not adopt a plan before November
24 16 of the year following the census year, the Texas Supreme Court
25 shall adopt a plan not later than December 30.

26 (d) The commission shall submit each adopted redistricting
27 plan to the governor, the secretary of state, and the presiding

1 officer of each chamber of the legislature.

2 Sec. 581.153. CHALLENGES TO A PLAN. (a) After a
3 redistricting plan has been adopted by the commission or the Texas
4 Supreme Court, any aggrieved person may file a petition with the
5 Texas Supreme Court to challenge the plan.

6 (b) If the final judgment of a state or federal court
7 invalidates all or part of a redistricting plan or otherwise makes
8 it unenforceable, the commission shall reconvene to modify and
9 adopt a new plan before January 31 of the next year.

10 (c) The commission may reconvene on the motion of at least
11 four members filed with the secretary of state any time after a
12 redistricting plan has been adopted to modify the plan and at other
13 times necessary to fulfill its obligations under the constitution.

14 Sec. 581.154. PLAN REQUIREMENTS. To the extent practicable
15 to comply with federal law, redistricting plans adopted by the
16 commission must be composed of:

- 17 (1) districts contiguous with one another;
18 (2) districts of nearly equal population; and
19 (3) districts that are compact and convenient, and
20 separated from adjoining districts by natural geographic barriers,
21 artificial barriers, or political subdivision boundaries.

22 Sec. 581.155. PLAN REPORT. (a) Each redistricting plan the
23 commission adopts must include a report, given to the secretary of
24 state, that includes:

- 25 (1) the total population of each district with its
26 deviation from the average district population;

- 27 (2) an explanation of the criteria used for the

1 redistricting plan, with a justification of the deviation from the
2 average district population for each district;

3 (3) a map for each district;

4 (4) a financial statement disclosing all expenditures
5 made by the commission; and

6 (5) relevant information developed by the commission
7 in carrying out its duties, including maps, data, meeting minutes,
8 written communications, and other information.

9 (b) The secretary of state shall make a copy of the report
10 available to the public.

11 SECTION 3. (a) Except as otherwise provided by Subsection
12 (b) of this section, this Act takes effect January 1, 2030.

13 (b) This Act takes effect only if the constitutional
14 amendment proposed by the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023,
15 establishing the Texas Redistricting Commission to redistrict the
16 United States House of Representatives and the Texas Legislature is
17 approved by the voters. If that proposed constitutional amendment
18 is not approved by the voters, this Act has no effect.