

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 872
By: Denny
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Under current law, Texas provides four uniform election dates, but allows seven exceptions permitting political subdivisions to hold elections on other days. The multitude of election dates that result from this situation causes confusion, frustration, and fatigue among voters, election officials, and volunteers, all of which contribute to low voter turnout. Some of the excepted political subdivisions take advantage of the apathy created by this “voter fatigue” to schedule elections on inconvenient dates that are not widely publicized. Moreover, the large number of election dates is costly to local taxpayers. According to an estimation by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, the consolidation of four election days into two and the elimination of the exception for education-related bond elections could save local governments and their taxpayers as much as \$700,000 to \$1,200,000 a year. House Bill 872 reduces the number of uniform election dates and eliminates certain exceptions to the uniform election date provisions.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee’s opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

House Bill 872 amends the Election Code by restricting the dates for general or special elections to the first Saturday in May or the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November by deleting the first Saturday in February and the second Saturday in September as eligible uniform election dates.

The bill deletes the exception to the uniform election date provisions for elections held by political subdivisions for the issuance or assumption of bonds relating to public schools or colleges or the levy of a tax for the maintenance of a public school or college.

HB 872 authorizes the governing body of a political subdivision other than a county to change the date on which it holds its general election for officers to another authorized uniform election date not later than December 31, 2003, rather December 31, 1999. The bill prohibits the election on the new date from being held before 2004, rather than before 2000. The bill requires, not later than December 31, 2003, a political subdivision that before October 1, 2003, held its general elections for officers on the February or September uniform election date to change the election date to either the May or November uniform election date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

October 1, 2003.