

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 1696  
By: Denny  
Elections  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Under current law, in order to be accepted for service, a poll watcher must be present at the polling place at the time it opens for voting on election day. Additionally, the law prohibits a poll watcher from leaving the polling place during the time the polls are open on election day, unless the presiding judge has given the poll watcher permission to leave for a necessary activity. This can create a hardship for poll watchers, some of whom are not able to leave the poll to eat during the day without risking being denied readmittance to the polling place. House Bill 1696 removes these restrictions to enable poll watchers to serve at polling places during the hours the watcher chooses.

### **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 1696 amends the Election Code by deleting the provision prohibiting a poll watcher from being accepted for service if the watcher is not present at the time the polls are opened for voting. The bill authorizes a watcher to serve at the polling place during the hours the watcher chooses. The bill prohibits a watcher from leaving the polling place before the counting of ballots is completed, if the watcher is present at the polling place when the ballots are counted. The bill repeals certain provisions relating to poll watchers leaving the polls.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2003.