

By: Crownover

H.B. No. 2700

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the appointment of certain judicial offices and a
3 nonpartisan election for the retention or rejection of a person
4 appointed to those offices.

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

6 SECTION 1. Chapter 21, Government Code, is amended by
7 adding Section 21.010 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 21.010. APPOINTMENT AND RETENTION OF JUSTICES AND
9 JUDGES. (a) This section applies to each office of justice or
10 judge for which the Texas Constitution requires a person appointed
11 to fill a vacancy in the office to be subject to retention or
12 rejection by the voters at the end of the appointed term and each
13 successive term.

14 (b) In conjunction with the last general election for state
15 and county officers to be held before the end of a term of office to
16 which a justice or judge is appointed or retained, the justice or
17 judge is subject to retention or rejection at the nonpartisan
18 judicial retention election in accordance with Chapter 291,
19 Election Code.

20 (c) If a justice or judge does not seek retention, or
21 withdraws from the retention election, as provided by Chapter 291,
22 Election Code, the vacancy existing at the beginning of the
23 succeeding term shall be filled in the manner prescribed by the
24 Texas Constitution.

1 (d) If a vacancy occurs in the office of a justice or judge
2 seeking retention and the name of the justice or judge is omitted
3 from the retention election ballot under Chapter 291, Election
4 Code, the vacancy shall be filled in the manner prescribed by the
5 Texas Constitution.

6 (e) If a majority of the votes received on the question are
7 for the retention of the justice or judge, the person is entitled to
8 remain in office for a regular term beginning on the first day of
9 the following January, unless the person becomes ineligible or is
10 removed as provided by law.

11 (f) If less than a majority of the votes received on the
12 question are for retention, a vacancy in the office exists on the
13 first day of the following January, and the vacancy shall be filled
14 in the manner prescribed by the Texas Constitution.

15 (g) If the name of a justice or judge seeking retention
16 appears on the retention election ballot under Chapter 291,
17 Election Code, although a vacancy has occurred in the office, the
18 retention election for that office has no effect, and the vacancy
19 shall be filled in the manner prescribed by the Texas Constitution.

20 SECTION 2. The Election Code is amended by adding Title 17
21 to read as follows:

22 TITLE 17. NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL RETENTION ELECTIONS

23 CHAPTER 291. RETENTION ELECTION

24 Sec. 291.001. DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY. (a) Not later than
25 5 p.m. on June 1 preceding the nonpartisan judicial retention
26 election at which the justice or judge is subject to retention or
27 rejection, a justice or judge who seeks to continue to serve in that

1 office must file with the secretary of state a declaration of
2 candidacy to succeed to the next term.

3 (b) A declaration may not be filed earlier than the 30th day
4 before the date of the filing deadline. A declaration filed by mail
5 is considered to be filed at the time of its receipt by the
6 appropriate authority.

7 (c) The filling of the subsequent vacancy for the office for
8 which a declaration of candidacy is not filed is covered by Section
9 21.010, Government Code.

10 Sec. 291.002. WITHDRAWAL, DEATH, OR INELIGIBILITY. (a)
11 With respect to withdrawal, death, or ineligibility of a candidate
12 in a nonpartisan judicial retention election, this section
13 supersedes Subchapter A, Chapter 145, to the extent of any
14 conflict.

15 (b) A candidate may not withdraw from the retention election
16 after the 65th day before election day.

17 (c) A withdrawal request must be filed with the authority
18 with whom the withdrawing candidate's declaration of candidacy is
19 required to be filed.

20 (d) A candidate's name shall be omitted from the retention
21 election ballot if the candidate withdraws, dies, or is declared
22 ineligible on or before the 65th day before election day.

23 (e) If a candidate who has made a declaration of candidacy
24 that complies with the applicable requirements dies or is declared
25 ineligible after the 65th day before election day, the candidate's
26 name shall be placed on the retention election ballot.

27 (f) The filling of the subsequent vacancy for the office

1 following implementation of Subsection (d) or (e) is covered by
2 Section 21.010, Government Code.

3 Sec. 291.003. CERTIFICATION OF NAMES FOR PLACEMENT ON
4 RETENTION ELECTION BALLOT. (a) Except as provided by Subsection
5 (c), the secretary of state shall certify in writing for placement
6 on the nonpartisan judicial retention election ballot the name of
7 each candidate who files with the secretary a declaration of
8 candidacy that complies with Section 291.001.

9 (b) Not later than the 55th day before election day, the
10 secretary of state shall deliver the certification to the authority
11 responsible for having the official ballot prepared in each county
12 in which the candidate's name is to appear on the ballot.

13 (c) A candidate's name may not be certified if, before
14 delivering the certification, the secretary of state learns that
15 the name is to be omitted from the ballot under Section 291.002.

16 Sec. 291.004. RETENTION ELECTION BALLOT. The name of the
17 person subject to retention or rejection shall be submitted to the
18 voters on the nonpartisan judicial retention election ballot
19 following the offices subject to election under the heading
20 "Retention of Nonpartisan Judicial Offices," in substantially the
21 following form:

22 "Shall (Justice or Judge)_____

23 _____

24 be retained in office as (justice or judge) of the
25 (name of court)_____?"

26 _____ "Yes"

27 _____ "No"

1 Sec. 291.005. GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCT OF RETENTION
2 ELECTION. (a) Except as otherwise provided by this code, the
3 nonpartisan judicial retention election shall be conducted and the
4 results canvassed, tabulated, and reported in the manner applicable
5 to partisan offices in the general election for state and county
6 officers.

7 (b) A certificate of election shall be issued to a retained
8 officer in the same manner as provided for a candidate elected to an
9 office.

10 Sec. 291.006. WRITE-IN VOTING PROHIBITED. Write-in voting
11 is not permitted in a nonpartisan judicial retention election.

12 Sec. 291.007. POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENDITURES. A
13 candidate for retention of a judicial office is subject to Title 15
14 and shall comply with that title in the same manner as a candidate
15 for election to the office.

16 Sec. 291.008. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER PARTS OF CODE. The
17 other titles of this code apply to a nonpartisan judicial retention
18 election except provisions that are inconsistent with this title or
19 that cannot feasibly be applied in a retention election.

20 Sec. 291.009. ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES. The secretary of
21 state shall prescribe any additional procedures necessary for the
22 orderly and proper administration of elections held under this
23 chapter.

24 SECTION 3. Section 1.005, Election Code, is amended by
25 amending Subdivision (9) and adding Subdivisions (25) and (26) to
26 read as follows:

27 (9) "Independent candidate" means a candidate in a

1 nonpartisan election or a candidate in a partisan election who is
2 not the nominee of a political party. The term does not include a
3 nonpartisan judicial candidate.

4 (25) "Nonpartisan judicial candidate" means a
5 candidate in a nonpartisan judicial retention election.

6 (26) "Nonpartisan judicial retention election" means
7 an election held under Chapter 291.

8 SECTION 4. Section 41.002, Election Code, is amended to
9 read as follows:

10 Sec. 41.002. GENERAL ELECTION FOR STATE AND COUNTY
11 OFFICERS. The general election for state and county officers,
12 including the nonpartisan judicial retention election, shall be
13 held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in
14 even-numbered years.

15 SECTION 5. Section 52.092, Election Code, is amended by
16 amending Subsections (a), (c), and (d) and adding Subsection (f-1)
17 to read as follows:

18 (a) For an election at which offices regularly filled at the
19 general election for state and county officers, including the
20 nonpartisan judicial retention election, are to appear on the
21 ballot, the offices shall be listed in the following order:

22 (1) offices of the federal government;

23 (2) offices of the state government:

24 (A) statewide offices;

25 (B) district offices;

26 (3) offices of the county government:

27 (A) county offices;

1 (B) precinct offices.

2 (c) Statewide offices of the state government shall be
3 listed in the following order:

4 (1) governor;

5 (2) lieutenant governor;

6 (3) attorney general;

7 (4) comptroller of public accounts;

8 (5) commissioner of the General Land Office;

9 (6) commissioner of agriculture;

10 (7) railroad commissioner[+]

11 [~~(8) chief justice, supreme court,~~

12 [~~(9) justice, supreme court,~~

13 [~~(10) presiding judge, court of criminal appeals,~~

14 [~~(11) judge, court of criminal appeals]~~.

15 (d) District offices of the state government shall be listed
16 in the following order:

17 (1) member, State Board of Education;

18 (2) state senator;

19 (3) state representative;

20 (4) [~~chief justice, court of appeals,~~

21 [~~(5) justice, court of appeals,~~

22 [~~(6) district judge,~~

23 [~~(7) criminal district judge,~~

24 [~~(8) family district judge,~~

25 [~~(9)] district attorney;~~

26 (5) [~~(10)] criminal district attorney.~~

27 (f-1) Nonpartisan judicial retention election offices shall

1 be listed in the following order:

2 (1) chief justice, supreme court;

3 (2) justice, supreme court;

4 (3) presiding judge, court of criminal appeals;

5 (4) judge, court of criminal appeals;

6 (5) chief justice, court of appeals;

7 (6) justice, court of appeals;

8 (7) district judge;

9 (8) criminal district judge;

10 (9) family district judge.

11 SECTION 6. Section 145.003(b), Election Code, is amended to
12 read as follows:

13 (b) A candidate in the general election for state and county
14 officers, including the nonpartisan judicial retention election,
15 may be declared ineligible before the 30th day preceding election
16 day by:

17 (1) the party officer responsible for certifying the
18 candidate's name for placement on the general election ballot, in
19 the case of a candidate who is a political party's nominee; or

20 (2) the authority with whom the candidate's
21 application for a place on the ballot or declaration of candidacy is
22 required to be filed, in the case of an independent candidate or a
23 nonpartisan judicial candidate, as applicable.

24 SECTION 7. Section 145.005(a), Election Code, is amended to
25 read as follows:

26 (a) If the name of a deceased or ineligible candidate
27 appears on the ballot [~~under this chapter~~], the votes cast for the

1 candidate shall be counted and entered on the official election
2 returns in the same manner as for the other candidates.

3 SECTION 8. Section 172.021(e), Election Code, is amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (e) A candidate for an office specified by Section
6 172.024(a)(8) [~~or (10), or (12),~~] or for justice of the peace in a
7 county with a population of more than 850,000, who chooses to pay
8 the filing fee must also accompany the application with a petition
9 for a place on the primary ballot as a candidate for judicial office
10 that complies with the requirements prescribed for the petition
11 authorized by Subsection (b), except that the minimum number of
12 signatures that must appear on the petition required by this
13 subsection is 250. If the candidate chooses to file the petition
14 authorized by Subsection (b) in lieu of the filing fee, the minimum
15 number of signatures required for that petition is increased by
16 250. Signatures on a petition filed under this subsection or
17 Subsection (b) by a candidate covered by this subsection may not be
18 obtained on the grounds of a county courthouse or courthouse annex.

19 SECTION 9. Section 172.024(a), Election Code, is amended to
20 read as follows:

21 (a) The filing fee for a candidate for nomination in the
22 general primary election is as follows:

- 23 (1) United States senator \$5,000
- 24 (2) office elected statewide, except United States
25 senator 3,750
- 26 (3) United States representative 3,125
- 27 (4) state senator 1,250

1 (5) state representative 750

2 (6) member, State Board of Education 300

3 (7) ~~[chief justice or justice, court of appeals,~~

4 ~~other than a justice specified by Subdivision~~

5 ~~(8) 1,875~~

6 ~~[(8) chief justice or justice of a court of appeals~~

7 ~~that serves a court of appeals district in which a~~

8 ~~county with a population of more than 850,000 is~~

9 ~~wholly or partly situated 2,500~~

10 ~~[(9) district judge or judge specified by Section~~

11 ~~52.092(d) for which this schedule does not~~

12 ~~otherwise prescribe a fee 1,500~~

13 ~~[(10) district or criminal district judge of a~~

14 ~~court in a judicial district wholly contained~~

15 ~~in a county with a population of more than~~

16 ~~850,000 2,500~~

17 ~~[(11)] judge, statutory county court, other than a~~

18 ~~judge specified by Subdivision (12) 1,500~~

19 (8) ~~[(12)]~~ judge of a statutory county court in

20 a county with a population of more than

21 850,000 2,500

22 (9) ~~[(13)]~~ district attorney, criminal district

23 attorney, or county attorney performing the

24 duties of a district attorney 1,250

25 (10) ~~[(14)]~~ county commissioner, county clerk,

26 sheriff, county tax assessor-collector, county

27 treasurer, or judge, constitutional county court:

1 (A) county with a population of 200,000 or
2 more 1,250

3 (B) county with a population of under
4 200,000 750

5 (11) [~~(15)~~] justice of the peace or constable:

6 (A) county with a population of 200,000 or
7 more 1,000

8 (B) county with a population of under
9 200,000 375

10 (12) [~~(16)~~] county surveyor, inspector of hides and
11 animals, or public weigher 75

12 (13) [~~(17)~~] office of the county government for which
13 this schedule does not otherwise prescribe a
14 fee 750

15 SECTION 10. Section 202.001, Election Code, is amended to
16 read as follows:

17 Sec. 202.001. APPLICABILITY OF CHAPTER. This chapter
18 applies to elective offices of the state and county governments
19 except the offices of:

- 20 (1) state senator and state representative;
- 21 (2) justice or judge of an appellate court; and
- 22 (3) judge of a district court.

23 SECTION 11. Section 172.021(g), Election Code, is repealed.

24 SECTION 12. (a) Each appellate justice or judge or district
25 judge in office January 1, 2006, unless otherwise removed as
26 provided by law, continues in office subject to this section.

27 (b) Each justice or judge listed in Subsection (a) of this

1 section who is in office January 1, 2006, is subject to retention or
2 rejection, in the manner provided by law for a justice or judge
3 appointed to the office after the effective date of this Act, at the
4 last general election preceding the expiration of the regular or
5 unexpired term for which each was elected or appointed.

6 SECTION 13. This Act takes effect January 1, 2006, but only
7 if the constitutional amendment proposed by the 79th Legislature,
8 Regular Session, 2005, providing for appointment to fill vacancies
9 in the offices of the justices and judges of the appellate or
10 district courts and for nonpartisan retention elections for those
11 offices is approved by the voters. If that amendment is not
12 approved by the voters, this Act has no effect.