

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1464
By: Quintanilla
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 was formed in the early part of the last century to provide irrigation water to agricultural land, but it does not provide any potable water or sewer services. The district is a special purpose district with taxes paid only by those people who own irrigable land in the district and receive irrigation water. Interested parties note that the majority of voters within the district are not taxpayers and that the majority of the district's taxes are paid by farmers and people who make a living off the land. These parties observe that the tax payments are proportional to the amount of land owned and the amount of water used and they assert that any unreasonable increase in district taxes will cause many of these farmers to go out of business and cause farm workers to lose their jobs. In addition, observers note that during each election the district must verify that each voter lives within the district's boundaries. Interested parties assert that legislation is needed to align the district with the majority of other irrigation districts in the state and to facilitate the registration of district voters.

H.B. 1464 seeks to address these issues by establishing provisions relating to voter eligibility and registration in the district.

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

H.B. 1464 amends the Special District Local Laws Code to establish that an individual is eligible to vote in an El Paso County Water Improvement District No. 1 election only if the individual is 18 years of age or older, is a United States citizen, holds title to or an interest in title to irrigable land within the boundaries of the district, and receives and uses irrigation water delivered by the district through the district's canal system. The bill requires an eligible individual, in order to vote in a district election, to register with the district not later than the 30th day before the date on which the district election is held. The bill requires the district to file with the county clerk of El Paso County a certified copy of the list of the district's registered voters not later than the 25th day before the date on which a district election is held. The bill defines "district."

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2011.