

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 986
By: Elkins
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current law requires certain voting materials, such as registration forms and notices, to be provided in the language of an applicable minority group as well as in English. Interest groups contend that the law as currently written could impose a requirement on some counties to provide voting materials in five languages. H.B. 986 seeks to reduce the costs associated with providing certain voting materials by allowing for voter selection of the language in which the voter wishes to receive a ballot by mail.

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. 986 amends the Election Code to require the secretary of state, for an election in which ballots for early voting by mail are required to be printed in two or more languages other than English, to prescribe procedures, including the modification, as appropriate, of the officially prescribed application form for such a ballot so that the applicant may indicate on the application the printed language the applicant desires for the ballot and so that, if the applicant does not indicate such a preference on the application, the ballot shall be provided to the applicant in English. The bill requires the early voting clerk to provide the applicant with a ballot in the language indicated on the application if that language is required to be used for ballots in the election or, if no language is indicated, to provide the ballot to the applicant in English. The bill exempts an election to which the bill's provisions apply from the requirement that a separate Spanish translation of a ballot for early voting by mail be furnished to each voter in an election subject to general bilingual election materials requirements.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.