

By: Ortega

H.B. No. 956

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to early voting by mail by any qualified voter.

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

SECTION 1. Section 13.002(e), Election Code, is amended to read as follows:

(e) Notwithstanding Section 82.005, a [A] person who is certified for participation in the address confidentiality program administered by the attorney general under Subchapter C, Chapter 56, Code of Criminal Procedure, is not eligible for early voting by mail [~~under Section 82.007~~] unless the person submits an application under this section by personal delivery. The secretary of state may adopt rules to implement this subsection.

SECTION 2. Section 82.005, Election Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 82.005. ELIGIBILITY FOR EARLY VOTING [~~BY PERSONAL APPEARANCE~~]. Any qualified voter is eligible for early voting by mail or personal appearance.

SECTION 3. Section 82.007, Election Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 82.007. PARTICIPATION IN ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM. Notwithstanding Section 82.005, a [A] qualified voter who, [~~is eligible for early voting by mail if:~~

~~(1) the voter submitted a registration application by personal delivery as required by Section 13.002(e), and~~

1           ~~[(2)]~~ at the time the voter's early voting ballot  
2 application is submitted, ~~[the voter]~~ is certified for  
3 participation in the address confidentiality program administered  
4 by the attorney general under Subchapter C, Chapter 56, Code of  
5 Criminal Procedure, is eligible for early voting by mail only if the  
6 voter submitted a registration application by personal delivery as  
7 required by Section 13.002(e).

8           SECTION 4. Section 84.001(a), Election Code, is amended to  
9 read as follows:

10           (a) To be entitled to vote an early voting ballot by mail, a  
11 person ~~[who is eligible for early voting]~~ must make an application  
12 for an early voting ballot to be voted by mail as provided by this  
13 title.

14           SECTION 5. Section 84.002(a), Election Code, is amended to  
15 read as follows:

16           (a) An early voting ballot application must include:

17                   (1) the applicant's name and the address at which the  
18 applicant is registered to vote;

19                   (2) for an application for a ballot to be voted by mail  
20 by an applicant who will be absent from the applicant's ~~[on the~~  
21 ~~ground of absence from the]~~ county of residence on election day, the  
22 address outside the applicant's county of residence to which the  
23 ballot is to be mailed;

24                   (3) for an application for a ballot to be voted by mail  
25 by an applicant who is 65 years of age or older on election day or  
26 has a sickness or physical condition that requires the applicant to  
27 reside in a hospital or nursing home or other long-term care

1 facility, or with a relative [~~on the ground of age or disability~~],  
2 the address of the hospital, nursing home or other long-term care  
3 facility, or retirement center, or of a person related to the  
4 applicant within the second degree by affinity or the third degree  
5 by consanguinity, as determined under Chapter 573, Government Code,  
6 if the applicant is living at that address and that address is  
7 different from the address at which the applicant is registered to  
8 vote;

9 (4) for an application for a ballot to be voted by mail  
10 by an applicant who is confined [~~on the ground of confinement~~] in  
11 jail as described by Section 84.009(a), the address of the jail or  
12 of a person related to the applicant within the degree described by  
13 Subdivision (3); and

14 (5) [~~for an application for a ballot to be voted by~~  
15 ~~mail on any ground,~~] an indication of each election for which the  
16 applicant is applying for a ballot[~~, and~~

17 [~~(6) an indication of the ground of eligibility for~~  
18 ~~early voting~~].

19 SECTION 6. Section 84.009, Election Code, is amended by  
20 amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (b) to read as  
21 follows:

22 (a) This section applies only to an applicant who, at the  
23 time the application for a ballot to be voted by mail is submitted,  
24 is confined in jail:

25 (1) serving a misdemeanor sentence for a term that  
26 ends on or after election day;

27 (2) pending trial after denial of bail;

1           (3) without bail pending an appeal of a felony  
2 conviction; or

3           (4) pending trial or appeal on a bailable offense for  
4 which release on bail before election day is unlikely.

5           **(b)** On request of the applicant, an application for a ballot  
6 to be voted by mail [~~on the ground of confinement in jail~~] may be  
7 submitted to the early voting clerk, at the discretion of the  
8 authority in charge of the jail, by personal delivery by the jail  
9 authority or by a designated subordinate of the authority.

10           SECTION 7. Section 84.011(a), Election Code, is amended to  
11 read as follows:

12           (a) The officially prescribed application form for an early  
13 voting ballot must include:

14                 (1) immediately preceding the signature space the  
15 statement: "I certify that the information given in this  
16 application is true, and I understand that giving false information  
17 in this application is a crime.";

18                 (2) a statement informing the applicant of the  
19 offenses prescribed by Sections 84.003 and 84.004;

20                 (3) spaces for entering an applicant's voter  
21 registration number and county election precinct of registration,  
22 with a statement informing the applicant that failure to furnish  
23 that information does not invalidate the application; and

24                 (4) on an application for a ballot to be voted by mail:

25                         (A) a space for an applicant [~~applying on the~~  
26 ~~ground of absence from the county of residence~~] to indicate whether  
27 the applicant will be absent from the applicant's county of

1 residence on election day and, if applicable, the date on or after  
2 which the applicant can receive mail at the address outside the  
3 county;

4 (B) a space for indicating the fact that an  
5 applicant whose application is signed by a witness cannot make the  
6 applicant's mark and a space for indicating the relationship or  
7 lack of relationship of the witness to the applicant;

8 (C) a space for entering an applicant's telephone  
9 number, with a statement informing the applicant that failure to  
10 furnish that information does not invalidate the application;

11 (D) a space or box for an applicant who is 65  
12 years of age or older on election day or has a sickness or physical  
13 condition that requires the applicant to reside in a hospital or  
14 nursing home or other long-term care facility, or with a relative,  
15 ~~[applying on the ground of age or disability]~~ to indicate that the  
16 address to which the ballot is to be mailed is the address of a  
17 facility or relative described by Section 84.002(a)(3), if  
18 applicable;

19 (E) a space or box for an applicant confined  
20 ~~[applying on the ground of confinement]~~ in jail as described by  
21 Section 84.009(a) to indicate that the address to which the ballot  
22 is to be mailed is the address of a relative described by Section  
23 84.002(a)(4), if applicable;

24 (F) a space for an applicant applying on the  
25 ground of age or disability to indicate if the application is an  
26 application under Section 86.0015;

27 (G) spaces for entering the signature, printed

1 name, and residence address of any person assisting the applicant;

2 (H) a statement informing the applicant of the  
3 condition prescribed by Section 81.005; and

4 (I) a statement informing the applicant of the  
5 requirement prescribed by Section 86.003(c).

6 SECTION 8. Sections 86.001(b) and (c), Election Code, are  
7 amended to read as follows:

8 (b) If the application complies with the applicable  
9 requirements prescribed by this title [~~applicant is entitled to~~  
10 ~~vote an early voting ballot by mail~~], the clerk shall provide an  
11 official ballot to the applicant as provided by this chapter.

12 (c) Except as provided by Section 86.008, if the applicant  
13 is not entitled to vote in the election [~~by mail~~], the clerk shall  
14 reject the application, enter on the application "rejected" and the  
15 reason for and date of rejection, and deliver written notice of the  
16 reason for the rejection to the applicant at both the residence  
17 address and mailing address on the application. A ballot may not be  
18 provided to an applicant whose application is rejected.

19 SECTION 9. Section 86.003(c), Election Code, is amended to  
20 read as follows:

21 (c) The address to which the balloting materials must be  
22 addressed is the address at which the voter is registered to vote,  
23 or the registered mailing address if different, unless the  
24 application to vote early by mail indicates that the voter [~~ground~~  
25 ~~for voting by mail is~~]:

26 (1) will be absent from the voter's [~~absence from the~~  
27 county of residence on election day, in which case the address must

1 be an address outside the voter's county of residence;

2 (2) is confined [~~confinement~~] in jail as described by  
3 Section 84.009(a), in which case the address must be the address of  
4 the jail or of a relative described by Section 84.002(a)(4); or

5 (3) is 65 years of age or older on election day or has a  
6 sickness or physical condition that requires the applicant to  
7 reside in a hospital or nursing home or other long-term care  
8 facility, or with a relative, [~~age or disability~~] and [~~the voter~~] is  
9 living at a hospital, nursing home or other long-term care  
10 facility, or retirement center, or with a relative described by  
11 Section 84.002(a)(3), in which case the address must be the address  
12 of that facility or relative.

13 SECTION 10. Section 86.004(b), Election Code, is amended to  
14 read as follows:

15 (b) For an election to which Section 101.104 applies, the  
16 balloting materials for a voter who indicates on the application  
17 for a ballot to be voted by mail or the federal postcard application  
18 that the voter seeks [~~is eligible~~] to vote early by mail as a  
19 consequence of the voter's being outside the United States shall be  
20 mailed on or before the later of the 45th day before election day or  
21 the seventh calendar day after the date the clerk receives the  
22 application. However, if it is not possible to mail the ballots by  
23 the deadline of the 45th day before election day, the clerk shall  
24 notify the secretary of state within 24 hours of knowing that the  
25 deadline will not be met. The secretary of state shall monitor the  
26 situation and advise the clerk, who shall mail the ballots as soon  
27 as possible in accordance with the secretary of state's guidelines.

1 SECTION 11. Section 87.041(b), Election Code, is amended to  
2 read as follows:

3 (b) A ballot may be accepted only if:

4 (1) the carrier envelope certificate is properly  
5 executed;

6 (2) neither the voter's signature on the ballot  
7 application nor the signature on the carrier envelope certificate  
8 is determined to have been executed by a person other than the  
9 voter, unless signed by a witness;

10 (3) ~~[the voter's ballot application states a legal~~  
11 ~~ground for early voting by mail];~~

12 [~~(4)~~] the voter is registered to vote, if registration  
13 is required by law;

14 (4) ~~[(5) the address to which the ballot was mailed to~~  
15 ~~the voter, as indicated by the application, was outside the voter's~~  
16 ~~county of residence, if the ground for early voting is absence from~~  
17 ~~the county of residence];~~

18 [~~(6)~~] for a voter to whom a statement of residence form  
19 was required to be sent under Section 86.002(a), the statement of  
20 residence is returned in the carrier envelope and indicates that  
21 the voter satisfies the residence requirements prescribed by  
22 Section 63.0011; and

23 (5) [~~(7)~~] the address to which the ballot was mailed  
24 to the voter is an address [~~that is otherwise~~] required by Sections  
25 84.002 and 86.003.

26 SECTION 12. Section 102.001(a), Election Code, is amended  
27 to read as follows:



1           (a) A qualified voter is eligible to vote a late ballot as  
2 provided by this chapter if the voter has a sickness or physical  
3 condition [~~described by Section 82.002~~] that prevents the voter  
4 from appearing at the polling place on election day without a  
5 likelihood of needing personal assistance or of injuring the  
6 voter's health and originates on or after the day before the last  
7 day for submitting an application for a ballot to be voted by mail.

8           SECTION 13. Sections 82.001, 82.002, 82.003, 82.004,  
9 84.002(b), and 112.002(b), Election Code, are repealed.

10           SECTION 14. The changes in law made by this Act apply only  
11 to an election ordered on or after September 1, 2017.

12           SECTION 15. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.