

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 85TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 11, 2017

TO: Honorable Jodie Laubenberg, Chair, House Committee on Elections

FROM: Ursula Parks, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: SB1296 by Huffman (Relating to the review of ballot proposition language for certain political subdivision elections.), **As Engrossed**

No significant fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would amend the Election Code to require a review of ballot proposition language to ensure that it is clear and understandable to the average voter. The requirement would apply to political subdivisions in counties with a population of more than 120,000. The review is to be conducted by a three judge panel drawn from the administrative judicial region. If the review finds the language is not clear or understandable the panel may provide the subdivision with rewritten ballot language. Following a disapproval the political subdivision may hold the election with the rewritten language or submit revised ballot language for approval.

According to the Secretary of State, advisory materials could be updated within existing resources. According to the Office of Court Administration, while a panel of three-judges would have to be convened by the regional presiding judges to do the work required under the bill and staff would be required to assist in the process, the additional work is anticipated to be absorbed using existing judicial resources. Therefore, no significant fiscal impact to the court system is anticipated.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

Local Government Impact

According to Dallas County, while the bill is not anticipated to have a significant fiscal impact, technical limitations on character limits available for ballot propositions could cause difficulties in developing acceptable wording propositions.

According to Williamson County, the bill would have a significant fiscal impact on some counties, but the cost cannot be determined. An example of these additional costs would be overtime hours to meet defined timelines and deadlines.

Source Agencies: 212 Office of Court Administration, Texas Judicial Council, 307 Secretary of State

LBB Staff: UP, LBO, AG, GG, GP