

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3999

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

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Hearing Date: April 15, 2021 8:00 AM

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Kimberly Bridges Young

Self

Crp Christi, TX

Vote yes!

Bill Sargent, Former Chief Deputy Clerk for Elections, Galveston County

Self

Galveston, TX

By and large in the past, references to the Alternate Judge have been missing from much of Section 32 of the Election Code. This bill includes the Alternate in most places where the Presiding Judge is only mentioned.

This bill also does three important things:

First, it ensures the Presiding and Alternate Judges appoint an equal number of clerks, except when there are an odd number to be hired. In that case there would be a difference of one clerk between them. There have been instances in some counties where a judge hired only one clerk the opposing party and the rest were from his own party. The provision in this bill ensures equal representation, thereby providing checks and balances in order to avoid the specter of inappropriate behavior.

The second key thing this bill does is to ensure that both the Presiding Judge and Alternate Judge have access to all parts of the polling place when the polls are open. There have been reports of some Presiding Judges assigning their Alternate to greet voters at the door, thereby removing him or her from where people are being checked in and where people are voting. In order to ensure election integrity this cannot be allowed to happen, and thus this provision which you will find in Section 5 of the bill.

Finally, as also contained in Representative Beckley's bill, this legislation eliminates the nepotism prohibition for election workers. We have a difficult enough time finding volunteers who want to work elections. Let me tell you what one couple did... the husband and wife would get up about a half hour earlier than normal (that was about O-Dark-Thirty!) and the husband would drive his wife to one polling place. Then he would drive another ten miles to a separate polling place where he was assigned. In the evening they would reverse the process. This was a burden on both of them; the husband having to drive additional miles and his wife needing to await his arrival, but because it was the law, they did so. We don't want to put additional burdens on our workers. It's hard enough getting workers in the first place.

I have been told by sources who should know that in many counties they just wink at the nepotism prohibition and let family members work together. Rather than paying lip service and ignoring the law, we should change the statute; which is exactly what HB 3999 does.

I encourage you to pass this bill and send it on the floor for swift action.

Monica Carson

self

Bastrop, TX

Printed on: April 26, 2021 12:06 PM

Please support this bill that authorizes alternate judges to have same duties and responsibilities as presiding judges.

Bonnie Seelig

Self Retired

Spicewood, TX

The Alternate Judge (party that did not win in county) is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the voting site, along with the Judge. That means that they are responsible for being the eyes and ears of the voters at the site. At no time should they be "set aside" for a project or duty that would take them off the floor or out of view of the activities going on at the polling location.

Tanya Robertson, Senate District 11 SREC

Self

Taylor Lake Village, TX

IN FAVOR of HB 3999 to ensure election integrity and balance of authority at our polling locations in Texas.

I urge Chairman Cain to bring this bill up for a vote in committee and for committee members to vote it favorably out of committee.

Thank you for your time!

Donna Beth McCormick

none

Austin, TX

Having a presiding judge at elections - both in the precinct and election central - for at least three decades - you need to make it EASY to appoint election judges and workers. It is extremely difficult to get qualified, or really any, people to work. They work because they feel the patriotic duty. They hours a long and the pay is low, but there is satisfaction knowing that they have helped the freedom of voting we have in the United States. Voting should be made more available and easy - and yes I have paid poll tax the first year I voted in very rural Texas!

Elizabeth Miller

Libertarian Party of Texas, SD 10

Bedford, TX

Please remember that there may be more than two parties involved in the administration of an election. In Tarrant Co, we have a tripartisan process, as Libertarians are involved. Thanks.

Kathryn Williams

Self/retired

Austin, TX

Opposed. As a former election clerk, I am opposed to this bill. It leaves uncertainty as to who is the final authority in making sure polls are properly staffed. Election judges need flexibility. With the many bills introduced this session that emasculate election judges and clerks, and criminalizes what could just be mistakes by them, this bill threatens the ability of all counties to find sufficient workers. Perhaps we should require all poll watchers undergo the same training, take the same oaths and be subject to the same legal penalties as election workers,

JANIS REINKEN, ATTORNEY

Printed on: April 26, 2021 12:06 PM

SELF / ATTORNEY

AUSTIN, TX

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION HB 3999 04-15-21

I oppose HB 3999 as filed or as substituted, because it unnecessarily complicates and prolongs the process of enlisting clerks whom the Presiding Judge appoints. This is not about setting up co-judges at the election site. That would be overkill. I have personal experience with this, having served as an Election Judge since 2004. I have always had favorable experiences with my Alternate Judges. It's important to be able to work cooperatively and get along with each other. You cannot legislate that kind of behavior and maturity. In some cases, I have recruited Alternate Judges from the other party so that we would have a balance between the parties. I have sought out clerks from the Democratic Party as well as the Republican Party. In Travis County, the field of willing workers is limited. It can take an Election Judge 2 or 3 or more weeks to reach out to clerks and enlist the number of Clerks needed and be sure they can fulfill the schedule and be there at the times needed. Trying to coordinate with an Alternate Judge in selection of Clerks could double the time and effort it takes to assemble a good, dependable election team. This Bill seems to attempt to address personal attitudes which suggest a personal inability to work side by side and assure the election procedures are managed well, timely and properly. There is no reason to appoint an Election Judge or an Alternate Judge who cannot work cooperatively on that basis. And by the way, the election workers do not open any ballots nor do they touch them in a jurisdiction that uses the paper scanners (unless the voter is unable to do that for themselves). This Bill is unnecessary and would create complications making it harder, not easier, to assemble a good, reliable election team.

JoAnn Fleming, Executive Director

Grassroots America - We the People PAC

Flint, TX

JoAnn Fleming, Executive Director, Grassroots America - We the People PAC, speaking for the organization:

Grassroots America supports HB 3999. Authorizing alternate election judges to have the same powers, duties and responsibilities as the presiding election judge makes sense and should make the entire voting process more efficient and accountable.

We urge the House Public Affairs Committee to pass this bill out of committee.

Nancy True

Self

Hickory Creek, TX

SUPPORT HB 3999, Jetton

I urge support for election integrity reform outlined within HB 3999, having personally experienced/witnessed outright partisan abuse within election locations while serving in an official capacity from 2010 through 2018 as both Election Clerk/Poll Watcher in Dallas County General/Primary/Municipal Elections, during both Early Voting/Election Day (to include local poll locations/Dallas County Central Count).

HB 3999 specifies improved practices for election officials that would serve to enhance genuine bipartisan fairness at local poll/central count locations. Please support greater confidence in election outcomes by voting HB 3999 favorably out of committee.

shawn flanagan

self/retired

corpus christi, TX

Vote yes! This bill makes our election much freer and fairer!!!! Please support this balanced approach to overseeing elections.

Charles Wiley

Printed on: April 26, 2021 12:06 PM

Self

Alice, TX

Please Vote yes! Adding responsibilities for the Alternate Presiding Judge gives a checks and balances, especially if the Presiding Judge is not honest or ethical in his/her rulings. The more people “in charge”, the better the possibility that an honest job will be done, if nothing else than 1 of them calling out an injustice.

Kathryn Gordon

Self

Corpus Christi, TX

Yes

Larry Ringler

Self-retired

Portland, TX

Vote YES to improve checks and balances by giving the alternate presiding judge more responsibilities, especially if the presiding judge issues rulings that aren't ethical or honest.

Jessie Carlson

self

Corpus Chrsiti, TX

Vote yes. Adding responsibilities for the Alternate Presiding Judge gives a checks and balances. The more people “in charge”, the better the possibility that an honest job will be done.

Amanda Friedeck, Mrs.

Silver Star Food Stores/BRANDS Marketing Group, LLC

ALICE, TX

I, Amanda Sue Friedeck (Jim Wells County ) am in favor of HB 3999. This is so that our elections are transparent, accountable and fair.