

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 357
By: Bucy
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current law permits Texans to vote by mail under certain circumstances. Eligible Texans submit mail-in ballot applications to the early voting clerk, who then processes these applications and mails successful applicants their ballots. These voters then submit their mail-in ballots to the early voting clerk and wait for it to be accepted or rejected by the ballot board. To help voters track the status of their mail-in ballot application and completed, returned ballot, some counties began to maintain a public mail-in ballot tracker on their websites in the 2020 election cycle. During the subsequent legislative session, a statewide tracker was created to ensure equal access to such a beneficial tool. H.B. 357 seeks to change the information that a voter is required to enter to access the online tool.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 357 amends the Election Code to revise the requisite access information of the online tool that tracks the location and status of an application for a ballot to be voted by mail or a ballot voted by mail by, as follows:

- including the voter's date of birth among the information;
- removing the voter's registration address from the information; and
- replacing the requirement for the voter to provide the last four digits of the voter's social security number with an option to provide that number, the voter's driver's license number, or the voter's personal identification card number issued by the Department of Public Safety.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.