

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1631
By: Paul
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are currently strict requirements for watchers appointed to observe a precinct polling place during election day. During the early voting period, watchers can come and go without restrictions. On election day, however, only watchers who have served for more than five continuous hours have the ability to choose the hours they serve and come and go from the polling place accordingly. The same is not true for watchers who serve for less time. This places an undue burden on watchers needing to use the restroom, eat a snack, or who otherwise wish to take a break. H.B. 1631 seeks to give all watchers the ability to choose their hours and come and go from a precinct polling place by removing the five-hour continuous service requirement.

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. 1631 amends the Election Code to authorize all election watchers to choose the hours the watcher serves at the polling place. The bill removes the provision authorizing that choice only for watchers who serve at a precinct polling place for more than five continuous hours.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.