

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1632
By: Paul
Elections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In past elections, certain election workers have reported that they do not feel as though they have a proper understanding of election law and procedure. There is currently a lack of consistency in the training available for those workers; some positions lack online training, a test, or a handbook. C.S.H.B. 1632 seeks to ensure adequate training is available for the state's election workers by requiring the secretary of state to make standardized training and materials available online for election judges and members of an early voting ballot board, signature verification committee, or central counting station.

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

C.S.H.B. 1632 amends the Election Code to require the materials developed by the secretary of state for a standardized curriculum for election judge training in election law and procedure to be made available on the secretary of state's website free of charge. The bill specifies that the materials must include a published handbook.

C.S.H.B. 1632 requires the secretary of state to make a standardized training program for election judges available entirely via the Internet and at any time, without a requirement for prior registration. The bill requires the secretary of state also to do the following:

- require the passage of an examination at the end of the program; and
- provide an individual who completes the training with a certificate of completion, which expires no later than one year following the date it was awarded.

C.S.H.B. 1632 requires the secretary of state to provide a standardized training program and materials for the following election officers in the same manner that the secretary provides the standardized training for election judges:

- members of an early voting ballot board;
- members of a signature verification committee; and
- members of a central counting station.

C.S.H.B. 1632 establishes that completion of the standardized training program is not a prerequisite to eligibility for service in an election by any of the following election officers:

- a county election official;

- a presiding or alternate election judge;
- an election clerk;
- a member of an early voting ballot board;
- a member of a signature verification committee; or
- a central counting station officer.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1632 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Both the introduced and the substitute require the secretary of state to make standardized training programs and materials for election judges available online. However, the introduced provided for the standardized program to serve as a replacement for training provided by certain local entities using material distributed by the secretary of state by repealing provisions relating to that local training, while the substitute provides for the standardized program to serve as an option in addition to the local programs and does not repeal those provisions.

The substitute establishes that completion of the standardized training program is not a prerequisite to eligibility for service in an election for certain election officers, whereas the introduced established that a current certificate of completion for the training program is a prerequisite to eligibility for service in an election.

The introduced removed the requirement for the secretary of state to develop and maintain a training program for watchers and required the secretary of state instead to provide a standardized training program and materials to watchers in the same manner as it provides such a program for election judges. The substitute omits these provisions and does not revise training requirements for watchers.