

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 4780
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State Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Constituents, the secretary of state's office, and county clerks have suggested that the information located on the back of official carrier envelopes for mail-in ballots is confusing and hard to read. Despite years of discussing solutions for this issue, to date there has been no attempt to implement a solution through legislation. H.B. 4780 seeks to resolve this issue by providing for required information to be entered on a signature sheet in lieu of on the carrier envelope.

H.B. 4780 amends current law relating to early voting ballots voted by mail.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the secretary of state is modified in SECTION 4 (Section 86.013, Election Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 64.0322(b), Election Code, as follows:

(b) Requires that the form for voter assistants be incorporated into the official carrier envelope or signature sheet contained in the official carrier envelope if the voter is voting an early voting ballot by mail and receives assistance under a certain section, or to be submitted to an election officer at the time the voter casts a ballot if the voter is voting at a polling place or under a certain section.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 86.002(b) and (g), Election Code, as follows:

(b) Requires the early voting clerk, before providing the balloting materials to the voter, to enter on the signature sheet contained in the carrier envelope the identity and date of the election.

(g) Requires the signature sheet contained in the carrier envelope to include a space for the voter to enter certain information. Deletes existing text requiring that the carrier envelope include a space that is hidden from view when the envelope is sealed for the voter to enter certain information.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 86.010(e), Election Code, to make conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 86.013, Election Code, by amending Subsections (b), (d), (e), (f), and (g) and adding Subsection (h), as follows:

(b) Requires that spaces appear on the signature sheet contained in the official carrier envelope, rather than on the reverse side of the official carrier envelope, for indicating certain information.

(d) Requires that certain textual material, as prescribed by SOS, be printed on the signature sheet contained in the official carrier envelope when it is provided, rather than

on the reverse side of the carrier envelope or on a separate sheet accompanying the carrier envelope, when it is provided.

(e) Requires that a certain notice be printed on the signature sheet contained in the official carrier envelope, near the space provided for the voter's signature. Sets forth the required language of the notice. Makes a conforming change.

(f) Requires that the oath of a person assisting a voter be included on the signature sheet contained in the official carrier envelope as part of the certificate prescribed by Subsection (c).

(g) Requires SOS by rule to require that a notice informing voters of the telephone number established under a certain section and the purpose of the telephone number be printed on the signature sheet enclosed with the balloting materials for voting by mail sent to the voter. Deletes existing text requiring SOS by rule to require that a notice informing voters of the telephone number established under a certain section and the purpose of the telephone number be printed on the official carrier envelope or an insert. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(h) Requires SOS to prescribe the form and content of the signature sheet that satisfies requirements of this code.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 272.011(b), Election Code, as follows:

(b) Requires SOS to prepare the translation for election materials required to be provided in a language other than English or Spanish for certain voter forms, including the carrier envelope, signature sheet, and voting instructions required by a certain section.

SECTION 6. Effective date: September 1, 2023.