

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 924
By: Springer
State Affairs
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many precincts are currently at or near the cap of 5,000 active voters, but have no facility within the precinct that can serve as a polling location. An example of this is that many retirement communities refuse to allow their amenity centers to be used as polling locations, or are so large, residents are unable to vote together at a single location.

As Texas continues to experience tremendous growth, this issue is becoming more apparent, especially in fast-growing counties. Recognizing that the overarching goal is to best serve the voters, the optimum scenario is to have a polling location in each precinct. However, when this is not possible, there is currently no mechanism to provide a suitable location for these voters. This bill seeks to remedy this issue by allowing larger counties to combine these types of precincts, up to 10,000 registered voters in a single polling location, to more adequately serve the voters of Texas.

As proposed, S.B. 924 amends current law relating to authorizing certain election precincts to consolidate.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 42.0051, Election Code, as follows:

Sec. 42.0051. COMBINING CERTAIN PRECINCTS. (a) Makes no changes to this subsection.

(b) Redesignates Subsection (c) as Subsection (b). Deletes existing text authorizing county election precincts in a county with a population of 250,000 or more to also be combined under Subsection (a) if the changes result in county election precincts with 500 or more but fewer than 750 registered voters.

(c) Redesignates Subsection (d) as Subsection (c).

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 42, Election Code, by adding Section 42.0052, as follows:

Sec. 42.0052. COMBINING CERTAIN PRECINCTS IN LARGE COUNTIES (a) Authorizes the commissioners court, in an election for which use of county election precincts is required in a county with a population of at least 150,000, but not greater than 1.2 million, to consolidate, on the recommendation of the county election board, two or more county election precincts into a single precinct, notwithstanding Section 42.005, if the polling place is located so it will adequately serve the voters of the consolidated precinct.

(1) Provides that consolidated precinct under this section cannot exceed 10,000 active registered voters.

(b) Prohibits a combined precinct from being established if it results in a dilution of voting strength of a group covered by the federal Voting Rights Act (42 U.S.C. Section 1973c et seq.), results in a dilution of representation of a group covered by the Voting Rights Act in any political or electoral process or procedure, or results in discouraging participation by a group covered by the Voting Rights Act in any political or electoral process or procedure because of the location of a polling place or other factors.

SECTION 3. (a) Effective date, subject to Subsection (b) of this section: September 1, 2023.

(b) Provides that this Act is contingent upon the passage of legislation proposed by the 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, relating to the use of banning public schools as polling places.