

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Elections
For SB 1599

Compiled on: Thursday, May 4, 2023 11:42 PM

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Hearing Date: May 4, 2023 8:00 AM

Chris Donofrio

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I strongly oppose SB 1599.

As a voter and proud Texan, I demand you let this bill die in committee.

During the Senate public hearing for SB 1599, only 18 testified in favor of it. 84 testified against it. Those opposing the bill outnumbered those supporting it by almost 5 times (actual 4.7).

Not many bills even have 102 people show up to testify. When they do, it reflects how many Texans believe that bill is a significant piece of legislation.

For most Texans it is difficult to provide testimony. We have to take a day, or more, off from work, handle day care arrangements, and impose some difficulties on others.

Because of such difficulties, those choosing to testify present a probable proportion of fellow voters.

The large difference between those who oppose SB 1599 and those who favor it shows that Texans overwhelmingly oppose SB 1599.

This is regardless of its probable political nature. We look at the text. It makes it harder for us to vote. I'm sure all of us don't want this. It's not a partisan issue.

As politicians, each of you should want fair and free elections without onerous state intrusion.

As voters we want to know that our votes are counted.

That's the only concrete way we can hold all elected officials accountable for their actions.

I'm ready to stand alongside the organizations opposing SB 1599. They showed up to testify against it.

Texas Civil Rights Project

League of Woman Voters of Texas

ACLU Texas

Common Cause Texas

MOVE Texas

Planned Parenthood Texas Votes

ADAPT of Texas

Austin Justice Coalition

Texas Grassroots Alliance

These groups cover a broad range of the political spectrum. Their united opposition to SB 1599 mirrors what Texans want concerning making it harder to have our votes counted.

As legislators you are expected to reflect the desires of those you represent.

I'm a voter. I'll remember how each of you voted on SB 1599.

I'll vote against my representative and my senator if they let SB 1599 become law.

I'll support and work for the reelection of those voting against SB 1599.

I'll support all new candidates who challenge those voting in favor of SB 1599.

I'll encourage others to act as I will act.

Texans demand fair and free elections.

Texans demand that each of our votes count.

Do not let SB 1599 pass out of committee.

Respectfully,

Chris J. Donofrio

Klaudia Forgacova
Self / operations manager
Fort Worth, TX

I urge you to oppose SB 1599. Multiple components would make voting by mail harder without it being necessary. We've had many audits proving voting by mail is secure and that Texas in particular has had secure elections.

If I'm understanding the bill correctly, any corrections needed to a mailed ballot must be done within 6 days of the clerk noticing the mistake. They may not even get in contact with the person within that time..

if they're voting by mail, they probably have something that makes it hard for them to go anywhere in person given how hard our qualifications are to vote by mail, so how do you expect them to fix it if they maybe have to fix it in the office or get online if typically unable that quickly?

Also, this bill does not even require the clerk to notify the voter! It says they "may" notify them. MAY! How do you expect someone to fix a mistake they may not even know about? Even if it was "must," it says to contact them by phone "or" email. OR?? People don't check either from unknown numbers or emails often. They have to be contacted all ways multiple times to even possibly get the message.

The signature portion is always unhelpful. If someone is rejected over signature, they should be told details on why. It's asinine that we even require that match and don't know what we're matching it to. Many people sign differently all the time and they're still the same person.

If they do have to submit corrections for signature, they should get more ways to correct that than listed here. A lady in Tarrant County was told to drive to the office and she's BLIND! She obviously doesn't drive. That's why she voted by mail. How's she also supposed to remember her signature having done it many years back and being blind? This restrictions are not practical, and now you're adding hurdles with how to correct the mistakes you're almost forcing to be made.

I do like that this allows for people to track their ballot, but it doesn't excuse or justify the rest of what it hampers of our democracy. That could be its own bill, with details of how you'd implement it for everyone.

Our elections are proven to be secure. This bill is unnecessary and just displays a fear and stifling of voters. Please oppose SB 1559.

Tore Fossum
self retired
Huntsville, TX

Please support and pass SB1599.

Tore Fossum
self retired
Huntsville, TX

Please support and pass SB1599

rhonda anderson
self
Longview, TX

I am testifying in favor of SB 1599

Catherine Viens, Mrs.

self

College Station, TX

Please make every effort to ensure the integrity of Texas elections. The 2024 election cycle will be the most determinative election to date. Securing elections is not only a Party priority, but it is a priority for every citizen who takes this duty and privilege seriously; we expect the same from our legislative representatives.

Charlene Reagan

Self and True Texas Project

SPICEWOOD, TX

FOR this bill.

Joey Bennett

Secure Democracy USA

Austin, TX

On behalf of Secure Democracy USA, we offer the following in support of SB 1599: the bill improves the mail in voting process in the following ways:

? Streamlined, uniform cure process - SB 1599 would make needed changes to ensure that mail voters in Texas have an opportunity to correct minor errors on their carrier envelopes. Additionally, the bill would task the Secretary of State to develop a standardized corrective form to be used statewide. Several states, including Florida and Ohio, have successfully used a standardized form to assist the cure process for a number of years.

? Improvements to the online tracking system - SB 1599 also corrects issues with the online tracking system. SB 1599 would replace the voter's registration address with the date of birth as one of the multiple factors used to verify the voter's identity prior to providing the tracking information. This change should greatly reduce the number of technical issues with the online system.

? Cure for ballot applications - SB 1599 also extends opportunities to cure minor errors to mail ballot applications. This change is especially important based on some of the experiences with the implementation of SB 1, which saw a drastic increase in the rate of ballot application rejections in the first elections held after SB 1 became law.

While Secure Democracy USA supports SB 1599 in its current form, we'd like to point out some opportunities to improve the bill even more:

Resolve inconsistency between ballot instructions and verification requirements - Currently, Texas mail ballot instructions tell the voter to provide their DPS number if they have one and to provide the last four digits of their Social Security number (SSN) only if they do not have a DPS number. In contrast, the statute concerning verification states the ballot should not be rejected if the number provided by the voter on the carrier envelope identifies the same voter as the one on the ballot application. Lawmakers should change the code concerning the ballot instructions to match the code concerning verification.

Eliminate reliance on subjective signature matching - SB 1 required voters to include an ID number on the carrier envelope when returning their ballot. Proponents of this change argued that it was necessary because signature matching can be subjective. We agree. The ID number required from the voter is sufficient to verify the voter's identity and avoids the subjectiveness of signature matching.

Expansion of secure online election-related transactions, including registration - SB 1599 expands on opportunities for voters to use secure online resources to track their ballots and correct minor errors. These opportunities make sense in a world in which many sensitive, high value transactions are conducted securely online every day.

We urge the committee to report SB 1599 favorably and to consider the additional changes we've outlined above.

Chase Bearden, Deputy executive Director
Coalition of Texans with disabilities
Austin, TX

Please support SB 1599

LAURA PROSKE
self house maker
SPRING, TX

I SUPPORT SB 1599. THIS REGULATION REGARDING BALLOTS VOTED BY MAIL HELPS TO ACHIEVE ELECTION INTEGRITY, SOMETHING THAT MUST BE OUR FIRST PRIORITY REGARDING ELECTIONS.

Bill Sargent, Former Chief Deputy Clerk for Elections, Galveston County
Self
Galveston, TX

Against the Bill:

This legislation seems to envision voters coming into a polling location, surrendering their mail by ballot, and having said ballot by mail processed just like any other absentee ballot that is mailed in. The voter would not vote in person, simply turn in their mail ballot.

Currently, the process is that voters are allowed to surrender their mail in ballot at a polling place, have it cancelled, and then vote in person. The only place an absentee voter can surrender an absentee ballot and have it processed like any other mail in ballot is at the elections office where he or she shows identification, signs a registry, and the mail in ballot is accepted for processing. This process works and does not need to be changed. If this legislation was changed to codify the current process I would support its passage.

Amanda Logan
self
Austin, TX

I SUPPORT this bill! Texas needs our elections strengthened and every possible loophole for cheating closed. Texans need to know with confidence that our votes are secure, counted securely and that they are not being cancelled out by illegal votes. Please close these ballot by mail loopholes that allow for these possibilities. Please vote yes!

Brad Logan
self - small business owner
Austin, TX

Please support SB 1599 for election integrity.

Fran Rhodes
True Texas Project, self (President non profit)
Ft Worth, TX

True Texas Project supports this bill. The mail in ballot system is the biggest hole in the election security/transparency process. Anything that can be done to tighten the procedure and make sure that ballots are not fraudulently submitted, without jeopardizing the voter's ability to cast a vote, is a step in the right direction.

Bonnie Seelig
Self Retired
Spicewood, TX

The clear procedures for returned "mail in ballots" are very positive. The procedures detailed for including the Early Voting Ballot Board (EVBB) are improvements to oversight. The EVBB Clerk in line 19, page 2, must mean that the EVBB is involved in the SENDING AND RECEIVING DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS. This is a new and positive addition to the EVBB'S responsibilities - Line 7 page 7. Line 24 on page 4, the addition of the poll watcher to this MAIL IN BALLOT APPLICATION PROCESS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO OVERSIGHT.

Jennifer Kratky
True Texas Project
Magnolia, TX

I support this bill. I am a delegate to the RPT state convention, and enforcing election integrity is a top platform priority!

Debbie Lindstrom
Self business owner
McKinney, TX

I support SB 1599, which allows voters a way to cure ballots that are missing information. If a voter inadvertently missed some required information, they should have an opportunity to correct and their vote should still count.

Beverly Roberts
Concerned Women for America of South Texas
Houston, TX

Please pass this in memory of our Lion-hearted Alan Vera.

Marisa Williams
Self/SAHM
McKinney, TX

I support SB 1599 as it is my understanding that Collin County attempts to make every effort to help mail in voters to submit a proper ballot. Let's see if we can get the entire state to follow suit.

Linda Maldonado
Retired
San Antonio, TX

I am against this bill

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Christina Drewry
self, Texas Freedom Coalition
Flint, TX

I support HB 1599. Mail in ballots are a problem across the nation, not just in Texas. This bill clarifies some procedures that are handled by the signature verification committee that will help ensure a better level of integrity.