

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Elections
For SB 1750

Compiled on: Thursday, April 27, 2023 10:50 PM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: April 27, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Tomalea Bench, Mrs
Self homemaker
Huntsville, TX

I support this

Diana Gee
Republican Party
Cypress, TX

I am in strict belief that we should eliminate the party controlling the elections. It should be the duty of an outside organization that is not affiliated to either party to make it fair and non partial.

Robert Batchelor
Self
Houston, TX

Please support this Bill.

Cindy Kryk, Ms
self
Houston, TX

The polling centers and election malfeasance rarely occurred when there was not an Election Administrator. Also noted, the country judge chooses this individual which in my opinion can become bias. We have no need for this position. An Election Administrator will side with the party in office if any issues occur. This is unjust for the voters of Texas. Voters should have more say in how elections are run.

Kristen McCarty
Self FBC GOP Election Team and RWCK Election Team
Katy, TX

Dear Senators,

Can you please consider adding a required "real time" communication tool, between the Clerk, and the Party Chairs for the purpose of Judge and Clerk allocation (HB 4030 is supportive of party chairs assigning the Judges directly to the locations but has yet to be heard), and can you please lower the population threshold from 3.5 million to 800,000.

Currently the County Chair hands over the list of Judges and Clerks to the Election Administrator or County Clerk and then the EA/Clerk actually allocates the assignments. Unfortunately in Fort Bend County the allocation has been given to a worker within the Elections office who assigns the Judge and clerk positions, without properly allocating the Judges and clerks according to the TEC code. The allocation is not Bipartisan, and also not from the approved lists provided by the Chair.

Our local GOP Elections team has battled this via email chain (so it is well documented) and in person, trying to make sure the EA office follows the law and assigns the poll locations appropriately. This battle starts over every single election, and there is no re-course for mis-allocation. In this current election for school boards, the EA has assigned 7 Republican Judges and 18 Democrat Judges during early voting. Because there is not bi-partisan representation of Judges or Clerks it gives the citizens the impression that the elections are already tainted, and it ends up disenfranchising the conservative vote.

Possible wording for Required communication with County Chairs:

- (a) The County election officer/clerk shall communicate with each political party county chair or their designated election team utilizing a online, secure, restricted access communications platform to identify the assignment of all judges and clerks in real time .
- (b) The online information shall include the date of the assignment, polling location name and address, contact information for the judges and clerks assigned, and any other information relevant to the timely and appropriate assignment of judges and clerks.
- (c) The real time tool shall be available to the political party chairs 60 days prior to the election

Thank you in advance for this consideration.

Thank you kindly for the consideration,
Kristen McCarty - Pct 899
RWCK Election Integrity Co-Chair
Fort Bend County GOP Election Team
346-387-0450

Tiffany Soliz
self
Katy, TX

I am support of this passing. As a resident of Harris County our elections have been, for lack of a better word, a Shit Show!! It is so frustrating to see and participate in. I believe it is truly the other side suppressing the vote.

Ronald Soliz
self
Katy, TX

I am in support of this bill. The county elections administrator position should not be in existence.

Tim Opatrny
Self
Houston, TX

This needs to pass. There was massive election fraud in Harris County (my County) the past election. This bill will help cure the problems. We need fair elections. Vote for this Bill.

Jacqueline Spin, Ms.
Self
Houston, TX

After working the past four elections, I feel it is important to return to elected county officials to be elections administrator and with transparency. What the Democratic party is doing in Harris county is corrupt. This last election in particular was disheartening. The lack of paper, not being able to get computers up and running in a timely manner, last minute extension of voting time past 7pm with provisional ballots, ballots being counted without proper chain of custody, all reeks of corruption. No single party should have control over election process if we want the people to have faith in our election process and accept the outcome. Lastly, it's no secret that most of the shenanigans occurred in polling locations where the majority of Republicans were registered.

John J Adams Jr., LTC USA RET
San Jacinto Chapter 782, Military Order of the Purple Heart
Kingwood, TX

I have served as an Assistant Judge,, in Harris County, for the last 5 elections and BOTH of the appointed Harris County election administrators have allowed pollical favoritism to prevent honest and fair elections. The "Election Administrator" position was started by the current county judge to keep conservatives from being elected to county positions. Prior to her appointments to this position the County Clerk administered elections and they were conducted honestly and fairly. We MUST keep County Judges from appointing their friends / supporters / donors from conducting fraud elections. elections belong to ALL the people, not just the corrupt officials.

Gaylyn DeVine
Self - Business Owner
Pearland, TX

I have volunteered and worked Harris County elections for several years and believe they should be run by the officials who are elected NOT selected by a specific party with the majority on Commissioners Court. Never have I witnessed such inadequate training and lack of support as I have with the last 2 Elections Administrators. At least when elections were ran by elected officials, they were more approachable to the public and cared about following the law. The elections administrator's office has also created a huge tax burden on us as tax payors and yet, we do not have any recourse in replacing them when they do not follow the law or uphold fair elections. Please support this bill and restore election integrity to our Texas elections! Sincerely,
Gaylyn R. DeVine

Jan Heinrichs
Self
Spring, TX

I support the abolishment the Harris County elections administrator, and other counties, as specified in the bill.

Kathy Haigler

Self - election consultant

Dale, TX

I SUPPORT SB 1750. There is ONE county in our state that is SO big and SO discombobulated that it really needs its own separate election code. The size of the county is quite difficult to handle logistically, but dividing the duties between the County Clerk and Tax Assessor-Collector just may be the ONLY way to get elections there back under control. The massive failures since they appointed an E.A. have been horrible. This may be the very best thing that could happen to overcome the incompetence.

Allison McMillan, Mrs.

Self

Houston, TX

As a volunteer election worker in Harris County for the last 15 years, I have seen firsthand how chaotic our elections have become. Each election cycle brings more incompetence and corruption and most Harris County citizens have lost total confidence in the results. I heartily support the abolishment of our local election administrator and hope that we can move to a system that makes election administrators accountable to the voters. PLEASE move this bill to the House floor for a vote and bring back confidence and sanity to our elections! Thank you.

Mark McMillan, Mr.

Self

Houston, TX

We've had enough with sloppy and suspicious elections here in Harris County and no one is ever held accountable! We must restore confidence by abolishing our local appointed elections administrators and moving to a new system that is accountable to the voters. I've lived in Harris County over 40 years and it is embarrassing that the country's fourth largest city cannot conduct an efficient and trustworthy election. Please move this bill out of committee and onto the floor for a vote!!!!

Elizabeth Tang

self

Houston, TX

I urge the committee to send this bill to the floor for a vote. We have had 2 election administrators in Harris county who were incompetent and since they were appointed, they were not accountable to the voters. This invites fraud and unfair elections. We must have free and fair elections and this legislation is much needed to address problems in Harris County elections.

Norri Collier DC

Self. Chiropractor

Houston, TX

I support HB 1750 and all other bills relating to voter integrity. Thank you

Michael Biasi

Gop

Houston, TX

I agree that this bill is a must to pass in the Texas House, office holders should be accountable not an Administrator official with the county.

Patricia Moore

HCRP Precinct Chair 0483

Houston, TX

I urge you to vote YES on SB 1750, a bill that would eliminate the Elections Administrator's office in Harris County and rightfully return elections to officeholders who can be held accountable directly by voters.

Tamika Harris

self

Houston, TX

I was an election judge in Harris County for nearly 10 years. During that time, I consistently experienced and witnessed slow downs in voting when elections were managed by the Clerk's office. The Harris County Clerk's office is perpetually understaffed. During elections court clerks are pulled from the court and made to work elections instead of working for the courts. As a result, not only is the election process slowed down but the courts as well. Eliminating the county elections administrator over burdens the clerk's office which already has a multitude of duties it cannot meet.

Since the implementation of the County Elections Administrators, the elections process has greatly improved. A number of voters have told me that the voting process has greatly improved since there has been a county elections administrators. An improved voting process, means more people participating in voting.

With a county elections administrator, Election Judges have a central place to obtain information as opposed to having to call several different phone numbers to get assistance. Particularly, large counties need an election administrator to run elections, so that the election judges can do their jobs efficiently, the thousands of necessary elections clerks can be hired and trained, the voters' wait times are reduced, and the votes can be counted.

John Moore

Self – Retired

Cypress, TX

Make Elections transparent and accountable to the voters directly! Thank you, uncle Paul

Chris Donofrio

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I strongly oppose SB 1750, engrossed version.

I urge you not to pass it out of committee.

Lines 15-23 on page 1 deeply disturb me.

"Sec.A31.050. ABOLISHMENT OF POSITION AND TRANSFER OF DUTIES IN CERTAIN COUNTIES. On September 1, 2023, all powers and duties of the county elections administrator of a county with a population of more than 3.5 million under this subchapter are transferred to the county tax assessor-collector and county clerk. The county tax assessor-collector shall serve as the voter registrar, and the duties and functions of the county clerk that were performed by the administrator revert to the county clerk, unless a transfer of duties and functions occurs under Section 12.031 or 31.071."

I see no non-political reason to do this. We have already litigated the invalid claims of voter fraud made by some. Our electoral system works. It does not need the changes proposed in SB 1750.

Passing SB 1750 will further undercut faith in our election system. This should be obvious to anyone who reads this bill. Targeting counties with populations greater than 3.5 million only impacts areas which have voted for primarily Democratic candidates for national, statewide, congressional and legislative positions. These areas have been called the "blue islands" in a "red ocean."

Turning county elections administrator's duties over to tax assessor-collectors and county clerks significantly interferes with our current, tested, and successful administration of elections.

It does not serve the public good.

I strongly oppose SB 1750, engrossed version.

I urge you not to pass it out of committee.

Respectfully,

Chris J. Donofrio

Brenda Patterson
Republican
Cypress, TX

This bill must be passed.

Romualdo Castillo
Self
Houston, TX

I agree with the bill 100percent! Have worked elections in the past, and I feel like the Harris county elections are crooked as heck, have voted for the last 40 years and I believe in a fair election. Thank you..

Tana Pradia
PWN Greater Houston
Houston, TX

I would like for you to oppose this bill

Brenda K Estis
Self / Retired / Volunteer / Conservative Activist / Harris County Ballot Board / Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee
Houston, TX

I am a resident of and a registered voter in Harris County. I am in favor of SB 1750 and whole-heartedly believe we should abolish the Elections Administrator (EA) position and county-wide voting as well. County-wide voting provides convenience, but it has completely destroyed the local precinct polling locations. My precinct has over 3,500 registered voters and the county did not provide an alternative within our precinct! Many older voters did not know where they should vote because they "had always voted there".

The EA was hired by the County Commissioners without regard to the voters. Harris County has not been able to run an election without serious problems since the first EA was appointed. We were NOT given a choice; whereas, we always VOTED for the County Clerk whose primary job was to run the elections. County Clerks were voted in...and could be voted out...if they did not perform! We have had two non-performing EAs...it's time for a change! Harris County voters deserve better!

PLEASE PASS SB 1750 so we can stop the madness! I am urging you to pass ALL the Election Integrity Bills!

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

Comments in Favor of SB 1750

This legislation is targeted at Harris County, which has had a pattern of mismanagement and missteps ever since its County Commissioners decided to create the position of Elections Administrator [EA]. That county's hiring of EAs who have little or no election experience just served to exasperate the election process which is a major logistical enterprise in and of itself. Prior to Harris County's formation of an EA position the kinds of issues Harris County experienced were nowhere near the magnitude of what we have seen recently.

This bill splits up the EA responsibilities, putting them back to how they were previously. In doing so, it takes the responsibility for running elections out of the hands of an un-elected county employee and places them back under two officials who are elected and are accountable to the voting public. For this reason alone, this measure is a good one. Elections have consequence, and if this measure becomes law, the voters will have a direct voice in who oversees the process.

Douglas Berry
Harris County Republican Precinct Chairman-0133
Houston, TX

I have witnessed firsthand a deterioration in election administration quality as a Presiding Judge who has run a polling location for multiple elections, since the creation of this position. Examples include equipment being issued that doesn't work that delays my poll opening, inept technical support that isn't able to troubleshoot issues on Election Day, and training provided by the Election Administrator that doesn't match up to the equipment used.

Sylvia Coulson
Self
Waxahachie, TX

I support this bill.

Randy Bellomy, Mr.
Self retired
Ovilla, TX

As Ellis County Republican Party Chairman I believe that some counties do not need EA. some I am in favor of this bill.

Kathryn Campbell Shumway
self, non-profit organization
Humble, TX

I am a resident of Harris County and oppose SB 1750. Having a dedicated county elections administrator has been incredibly helpful within the community. Their website is clear and easy to follow. They hold frequent events and outreach in the communities. They have clear priorities and responsibilities. Elections can always be improved, but removing the county elections administrator is NOT the answer to election improvements.

Erroll Ivery
Self / Deputy Tax Assessor-Collector
Webster, TX

Dear House Elections Committee, I have lived in Harris County for over 20 years and never did we have botched elections like we have the last two election cycles under Lina Hidalgo after her appointment of "Elections Administrators". It is inexcusable that any polling place in any precinct should not have enough operable voting machines and ballots. It is more inexcusable that the elections administrator would now refuse to cooperate with requests for public information regarding the election. Please vote SB1750 out of committee to the full Texas House with a recommendation to return the election administration back over to the Harris County Clerk without delay!

James Tang
Texas Asian Republican Club
Houston, TX

I urge the committee to send this bill to the floor for a vote. We have had 2 election administrators in Harris county who were incompetent and since they were appointed, they were not accountable to the voters. This invites fraud and unfair elections. We must have free and fair elections and this legislation is much needed to address problems in Harris County elections.

Patricia Snyder, Ms
myself
Richmond, TX

This bill is sorely needed and should be passed.

Edward Matthews III

Self

Seabrook, TX

I am in agreement with the SB1750 abolishing of the county election administrator position in certain counties We need free, fair and voter fraud free elections. Thank you.

Matthew Goitia, Mr.

Self - CEO

Houston, TX

My name is Matthew Goitia and I am a proud Houstonian and Texan, not born to this great state but as it is said, I got here as soon as I could. I have had the honor of serving my community as an election judge for the past two elections in Harris County and from my experience in both of these elections, the elections have been fraught with incompetency and potentially malfeasance by the very offices we the public rely upon to administer the elections; and it is this pattern of incompetency and potentially malfeasance which has eroded the public's trust in our elections. First with Harris County Election Administrator Isabel Longoria and most recently with Harris County Election Administrator Clifford Tatum, both elections administrators have proven to be partisan actors more interested in influencing these elections to ensure that their preferred party's candidates win these elections as opposed to being the independent facilitator/administrator that we the public are relying upon to prove us with free and fair elections and not they and their party's selections. So I ask that this bill (SB 1750) sponsored by Senator Bettencourt be voted in and ultimately made law, so that we can begin to restore trust in our elections.

Roy Morales, Retired Lt Col

Uu

Houston, TX

As a former Harris County elected official and State Republican Executive Committeeman, I support SB 1750. The person in charge of our elections should be accountable to the voters and should not be appointed. An appointed position and the added staff is an additional tax burden on the residents of Harris County. I thank this Honorable body for their time.

Cindy Rodibaugh

self

Flatonia, TX

The gross mismanagement of the past two elections specifically indicate the Harris County elections administrators office is unable to manage a fair election. The various and multiple instances of lack of equipment maintenance and distribution, the lack of ballot proficiency, the manipulation of polls and poll workers not to mention disenfranchising 10,000 voters is evidence of lack of ability and even corruption.

Melissa Rowell, Honorable

Self, Precinct 480

Houston, TX

I support this bill and urge that it pass favorably to the house for final approval! Let's put the job of running the county elections back in the hands of the County Clerk!

JoAnn McCracken

Myself/retired

Houston, TX

Please vote Yes on this bill. Election administrators are just more bureaucrats that are not accountable to the voters. We need to get rid of this extra layer of bureaucracy. It is expensive and inefficient.
Thank you for your service.

Carl Blair
Our Vote Texas
Austin, TX

April 27, 2023
Texas House Committee on Elections
Public comments against SB 1750
Submitted by Carl Blair

On behalf of Our Vote Texas, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to voter education and voter rights advocacy in the state of Texas, I write to urge members of the committee to vote against SB 1750 as it is an unnecessary and unwarranted infringement on local control.

Our Vote Texas provides voter resources that give Texas voters helpful information about the basics of voting. We also advocate for reforms that improve voting and elections in terms of both access and process. One of our chief objectives is to make sure Texans understand their rights at the polls and feel confident that they can successfully and safely exercise their right to vote.

In the 2022 midterms, there were media reports of widespread outages of paper ballots at polling places all across Harris County. But as later examination of the data has shown, those early media reports were wildly overblown. Fueled by those media exaggerations, lawmakers have launched a wide ranging attack on Harris County's very ability to run its own elections.

There is simply no evidence of any malfeasance on the part of the Harris County Elections Administrator or his staff. What has been presented by proponents of this bill amounts to little more than conspiracy theories. Similar problems occurred in other counties, yet out of the 254 counties in Texas, Harris County alone faces the potential of being prohibited from selecting the method in which their elections are run.

The people of Harris County, like all other Texans, deserve to have the ability to determine whether they want a non-partisan Elections Administrator selected by their county's elected officials or a partisan County Clerk to administer their elections.

Harris County voters do not need bills like SB 1750 to improve their elections. Rather, they need a strong investment in voter education and policies that provide better access to voting and modernized voter registration. As such, we urge committee members to reject this bill and continue working to better serve all Texans. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Reference: Jen Rice, Alexandra Kanik, and Staff Writers, GOP leaders say Harris County's ballot shortage was targeted at Republicans. Here's what the data says., Houston Chronicle, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/houston/article/harris-county-ballot-paper-shortage-investigation-17849980.php> (last updated April 21, 2023).

Tom Nobis
'self' and I am retired
Houston, TX

I am For the bill. I live in Harris County and eliminating the Elections Administrator position and returning the duty of Voter Registration to Tax Assessor collector and the Elections to the County Clerk will return confidence in the elections and place control back into an elected position. In an elected position if the person does not do the job, the electorate can vote to replace them.

Clinton Thornburg
self/retired
Houston, TX

I am for this bill. I worked as an election judge in Harris County for the 2022 elections, and I saw many of the problems that have been widely reported. Whether it was incompetence or planned, this election was an embarrassment and the people responsible need to be held accountable!

Belinda Holtzclaw
Self, Receptionist
Houston, TX

As someone who has worked in Harris County elections, both as a Democratic and Republican Precinct Chair (I changed my party affiliation) and election worker on and off over many years, I attest that the process we have come to under the appointed Elections Administrator, has become blatantly partisan and political, resulting in chaotic elections without rigorous standards. Everything from the slow and confused selection of workers and assignment of polling locations, to the lack of adequate training of workers for new equipment, to equipment failures and lack of response by the EA office to calls for assistance on multiple Election Days, plus the spread of eligibility disinformation, reflects the warnings that were given prior to this change by Harris County Democrats and Republicans who equally foresaw the failure built into this partisanship degradation of one of our country's most sacred rights. Texas must abolish the county elections administrator if we are to achieve a political process which unites this state in the confidence of the honesty and effectiveness of our election process.

Nicole Pedersen
Emgage and self
Houston, TX

Thank you for considering this testimony. I am a Harris County voter submitting this testimony in opposition to SB1750. Many of the election-related bills this session are aimed at Harris County because of claims made about the November 2022 election. As the Houston Chronicle discovered, many of those claims were untrue, and the Houston Chronicle's series of articles published last week debunked the assertions made by KHOU earlier this year. Elections in Harris County suffer from the same issues that would be present in any county of its size, particularly one using new voting machines and processing an extremely lengthy ballot, as was the case in November 2022. There are, of course, still problems with elections that should be addressed, but none of those, such as long lines or equipment malfunction, would be solved by abolishing the position of the Election Administrator. Harris County had long lines, insufficient supplies, equipment malfunction and a host of other election-related issues in 2018 and again in the 2020 Primary, before the Election Administrator position had been established.

The current Harris County Election Administrator is in the process of implementing a number of improvements to our election systems. He is overhauling the "judge line", which is the phone number used by election workers to reach the Election Administrator's Office, to address significant wait times. Similarly, he is implementing a program to barcode all election supplies so that the Election Administrator's office can better anticipate when to deliver supplemental supplies. By removing Administrator Tatum, these important changes will be stymied. In addition, if SB1750 were to pass, it would require Harris County to restructure elections by September 1. That timeframe is unrealistic and will lead to additional issues.

The Election Commission, not the Commissioner's Court, selects the Election Administrator. That Commission is made up of the chairs of both political parties, so that it is always bipartisan, as well as the County Clerk, Tax Assessor, and County Judge. Whether or not Harris County has an Election Administrator, and who that person is, should be considered and determined locally by our duly elected bipartisan Election Commission, not the State Legislature. SB1750 applies solely to Harris County, and we, the voters of Harris County, do not want it.

Koretta Brown
Bridges To Empowerment
Houston, TX

My family has been and some still are residents of Harris County and while I have relocated we continue to pay attention and be involved in the county that raised me, and I oppose SB 1750.

This bill is GODAWFUL because:

Harris County voters deserve one office that can be held accountable for successfully supporting voter access and running our elections.

Local voters should decide how our elections are run. This bill singles out Harris County voters as if we didn't know what's best for us.

Bridges to Empowerment, The Young and The Politics and other coalitions are building a solid working relationship with the Harris County Elections Administrator, helping that office with community outreach and education. This bill will set us behind in that work.

Many counties have election departments which takes a very heavy load off of county departments such as County Clerk and the Tax Assessors office. As community advocates members of Bridges To Empowerment and The Young and The Politics request that this bill is rejected as it is an attack against democracy.

Steven Wu
Woori Juntos
Houston, TX

Dear Chairman Smith and members of the House Committee on Elections,

My name is Steven Wu, Organizing and Policy Manager of Woori Juntos and I urge you to vote NO on SB 1750. We consistently run integrated voter engagement programs that help low-income, non English speaking Asian citizens become registered to vote, inform them about upcoming elections, what races and positions are on the ballot and what their roles mean, help transport them to the polls, and help interpret the ballot for them, and elevate issues we monitor while at the polls.

All of this was made easier with the modernization of voting because of Harris County's Elections Administrators. From drive-thru voting to county wide voting to listening to our needs of translating voting information into Korean, we deeply appreciate what the Elections Administrators have done to make voting easier and more accessible while keeping it safe and with integrity.

SB 1750 would take all of that away and suppress the vote of many non-English speaking citizens across Texas. For our democracy, liberties, and freedoms - vote NO on SB 1750.

Robyn Hoban
self
Bellaire, TX

As a resident and tax payer of Harris County, I fully support Senator Paul Bettencourt's SB 1750, a bill that would eliminate the Elections Administrator's office in Harris County and rightfully return elections to officeholders who can be held accountable directly by voters. We the people require accountability, participation, and transparency in how our elections are run in Harris County and therefore the people require elections run by duly elected officeholders and not an unaccountable administrative office.

Quynh-Huong Nguyen

Woori Juntos

Houston, TX

Firstly, the bill is founded on the rumor of widespread issues with the November 2022 election, which have been debunked by a series of articles published last week by the Houston Chronicle. There is no evidence that any of the issues seen in November 2022 were intentional, and the issues that occurred have been greatly exaggerated and mischaracterized. Furthermore, logistical issues are common in every large county, regardless of whether the election is run by a County Clerk or an Election Administrator.

Secondly, elections require the undivided attention of someone solely devoted to them. The County Clerk's responsibilities range far beyond elections, so the County Clerk cannot focus exclusively on elections. It is essential to have an experienced, trained professional overseeing the election process to ensure that it runs smoothly and fairly.

Thirdly, even when elections are run by the County Clerk, the County still employs an Election Administrator who is overseen by a bipartisan commission of elected officials. However, if SB1750 passes, the EA position will be overseen entirely by one elected official (the County Clerk), making the position less accountable to voters.

Fourthly, before we had an Election Administrator, the communication between the County Clerk and Tax Assessor was inefficient, leading to delays when election workers attempted to verify voter registration. Eliminating the EA position would only lead to a return to these inefficiencies.

Fifthly, the bill would go into effect on September 1, which does not give the County enough time to make such a dramatic transition. This rushed transition could result in chaos and confusion during the upcoming elections.

Sixthly, problems with Harris County elections predate the creation of the Election Administrator position. Dissolving that position does nothing to address issues such as long lines and equipment failure.

Seventhly, the current Harris County Election Administrator is in the process of implementing important changes that should solve some of the issues we've seen in past elections. By removing the EA, these changes will be stymied, and we will not see the improvements that are necessary for free and fair elections.

Eighthly, the reason voter registration in Texas is housed with the tax assessor goes back to the shameful history of a poll tax. It is time to move past this history and more efficiently administer both elections and voter registration from the same office.

In conclusion, SB1750 is based on misinformation and would have harmful consequences for our democracy. I urge you to oppose this bill and support the people of Harris County in their efforts to maintain free and fair elections.

Carl Jones, State Field Coordinator

TDP Rural Non Urban Rural Caucus

Spicewood, TX

SB 1750 eliminates the election administrator position – but only in counties with a population of 3.5 million or more. Harris County is the only county with that population, so this is clearly targeted at Harris County. It gives election administration authority to the county tax assessor-collector and county clerk.

Hey Bettencourt. What the hell is the purpose for this bill? Why strip away the elections oversight to the county TAC/CC? You know damn well they have their hands full with other matters. This tells me that you & your Republican legislative hoodlums are trying to set up the Dem voters of Harris County for failure. ie.. You're looking for trouble & if you can't find it you'll manufacture it. Attention ALL House Elections Committee Reps! Please KILL this bill! Its clear intent is unconstitutional and biased against ALL Harris County voters!

George Brian Vachris, P.E.

self / retired

Humble, TX

I support this bill. The largest county in Texas has had repeated problems with the administration of elections since the creation of the appointed position of Election Administrator by the Harris County Commissioners Court. I wish to state that since 2012 I have been an Election Judge or Alternate Judge in two different voting precincts (72 and 885) in Harris County, Texas for various primary and general elections. Procedures worked well under both elected Republican and Democratic officials, when elections were run by the County Clerk and voter registration was under the authority of the Tax Assessor-Collector. However, since the election responsibilities were turned over to an appointed official, various problems have developed. In the 2020 election, while I was the Election Judge at Atascocita Middle School (precinct 885), several voters came to me and stated that the polling place at Eagle Springs School had been shut down for a considerable period of time because the A. D. A. compliance officers forced Eagle Springs (precinct 447) to shut down because they were set up in the “wrong” room, and therefore the Eagle Springs set-up did not match the specified A. D. A. compliance measures. The A. D. A. compliance officers forced the election officials to remove their equipment to the “assigned” room and set it up again, effectively stopping voting at a “Republican” precinct for about an hour. Thus the county elections administrator effectively violated section 41.031 of the Texas Election Code through her appointed employees by restricting polling hours. When the A.D.A. compliance officers arrived at my polling place, they complained that I had not set-up the room in the way that they thought I would, but understood that they had not provided a room set-up plan and thus let the polling place remain in operation with a verbal criticism only. This unprecedented micro-managing of polling place set-ups and room locations by officials unfamiliar with previous local operations at two polling places demonstrates the poor record of the appointed elections administrator in Harris County. Further, the appointed elections administrator has failed to deliver sufficient ballots to various polling places in Harris County during the 2022 general election. Further, the appointed elections administrator has failed to submit timely reports of tally results.

SB 1750 is needed by the citizens of Harris County to restore voter confidence in the election process, and to replace the administration of registration and elections into the hands of elected officials of either party who will be more responsive to the voters. Senator Bettencourt should be commended for bringing this bill forward.

Karen Plante

self or precinct chair

Houston, TX

Please support SB 1750. I've worked elections since at least 2012 and the way things are being run by an Elections Administrator who was not elected by the people has been a nightmare. The EA office has made things more difficult for both voters and election workers and the system does not seem to have eliminated cheating, fraud, etc. as it was promoted to remove. Please rescue us from this terrible E.A. process and return the selection to the voters. Thank you.

Kelley Burhans

n/a

Houston, TX

As a voter in Harris County, Houston, Texas, I have been more than dismayed at the disturbing problems with not only the voting locations (running out of paper, people bussed in and told how to vote, etc.) but the questionable delays in results and personal accountability of the election officials as well as the county officials. I support abolition of the county elections administrator and want our Texas legislators to strive for clear, LEGAL votes! The voters and residents of Harris County deserve better and call for repair of our system! We DEMAND respect and accountability. Thank you!

Walter Daugherty

self

COLLEGE STATION, TX

We have seen huge problems with elections in all the large counties (Harris, Dallas, Tarrant, etc.) with no accountability, since their election administrators are NOT elected by the citizens of the county. Restoring the responsibilities for elections to the county tax assessor-collector and the county clerk, who ARE elected, gives the citizens of the county a direct way to hold them accountable.

Of course, nothing in this bill prohibits the elected tax assessor-collector and the elected county clerk from appointing deputies to handle the election side of their responsibilities, but if they appoint an incompetent deputy for elections we can just vote them out.

This is why I support this bill--the citizens of the counties over 3.5 million in population deserve to have officials they elect directly accountable for elections.

That being said, why should smaller counties be deprived of a way to hold election administrators directly accountable? Don't ALL counties deserve to have a choice of who they want to supervise the elections—a tax assessor-collector and a county clerk ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE, instead of an unelected unaccountable election administrator? Why not amend this bill to apply to ALL counties? ALL counties deserve a voice, not just large ones.

Please consider letting ALL counties ELECT the persons responsible for elections, not just the large counties, and please pass this bill. Thank you.

Joan Weiner

Resident of Harris County, self

HOUSTON, TX

I'm a Harris County resident, and I oppose SB 1750. The only county this applies to is Harris County.

Harris County voters deserve one office that can be held accountable for successfully supporting voter access and running our elections

Local voters should decide how our elections are run. This bill singles out Harris County voters as if we didn't know what's best for us.

There were problems in the November election, but SB 1750 isn't the solution. The solution is more resources and funding for elections administration.

Our Elections Administrator's Office was created by our democratically-elected Commissioners Court. SB 1750 would negate local control of elections.

Anna Lee Aitken

self

Tomball, TX

I am for SB 1750. As a resident of Harris County, I am familiar with the fiasco of our elections in 2022. I worked the primary run off in May 2022. The polling location I worked process over 2,000 voters because several polling locations in the area were closed last minute several days before the election. We had 10-12 machines assigned to us and during the day 1-2 of the machines were non-functioning. With the closing of the surrounding polls, it is clear the election administrator underestimated the turn out due to inexperience. During the November election, we did not run out of ballots because our PJ insisted that the polling location needed more ballots than the EA had designated. Elections are not an on-the-job training for the inexperienced or out of state hires. Previous elections handled by the County Clerk did not have the problems that were encountered last year. Both election administrators for Harris County have bungled their respective elections. This was and still is inexcusable. Election must be handled by elected officials not bureaucrats. They are not accountable to the voters. Get this passed and sent to the Governor for signature!!!

Judson Dunn
self / systems analyst
Houston, TX

To the Honorable Members of the House Elections Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB1750, which seeks to abolish the position of the Election Administrator in Harris County. This bill undermines the democratic principles of local control and accountability, while ignoring the essential role that dedicated Election Administrators play in ensuring the integrity and efficiency of our electoral processes.

First and foremost, it is important to note that the concerns raised about the November 2022 election have been significantly exaggerated and mischaracterized. The initial KHOU article reporting these issues has been debunked by the Houston Chronicle, which revealed that there is no evidence of intentional misconduct. As with any large county, logistical challenges may arise during an election, but these should not be used as a pretext for unwarranted legislative intervention.

Moreover, the current system is more accountable to voters than the one proposed in SB1750. Under the present arrangement, the Election Administrator is overseen by a bipartisan commission of elected officials, whereas the proposed bill would place the position under the sole purview of the County Clerk. This change would significantly reduce accountability and transparency in the electoral process.

Furthermore, the historical link between voter registration and the tax assessor in Texas is rooted in the shameful practice of poll taxes. It is high time that we move beyond this dark chapter in our history by consolidating the administration of elections and voter registration in one office, thus increasing efficiency and promoting a more inclusive democratic process.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that SB1750 would only apply to Harris County, making it a matter that should be determined by local government, not the state legislature. As champions of democracy, we must uphold the principle of local control and allow communities to make decisions that best suit their unique needs and circumstances.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully urge the members of the House Elections Committee to oppose SB1750 and safeguard the democratic rights and autonomy of Harris County residents. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Teresa McCollum
self
Borger, TX

I support this bill and applaud the author.

Ceila Cravey
Self, VP Administration
Baytown, TX

The Harris County Elections Administrator's office must be eliminated and elections rightfully returned to officeholders who can be held accountable directly by voters. I am FOR SB 1750.

Ray Shackelford

The Houston Area Urban League Center for Social Justice and Education

Houston, TX

First and foremost the office of Election administrator exists in multiple counties across the state of Texas and is brand new in Harris County. It was created by elected officials that were elected by the residents of Harris County. The state should not be removing an office that was created as a result of those elected by the will of the voters. It was also created out of a need to have voter registration and elections run out of the same office centrally and independent of any political party while separating from its racist past tied to poll taxes and other mechanism of systemic racism. With the office only having been in existence for two years there is not enough data to show whether or not it is more or less effective than the system we had in place previously. We would encourage Senator Bettencourt to provide concrete data in shaping this type of legislation and being clear on causation vs. correlation so that we can ensure that actual problem is being addressed. As it stands, this bill appears to be a direct result of the outcome of the last election not being favorable for some and not substantive in improving elections in Harris County. Our county is not only the largest in Texas, but one of the largest in the country. As a result it poses its own set of unique challenges in facilitating elections and there is opportunity for improvement. The Houston Area Urban League welcomes Senator Bettencourt to sit down with us and other members of the community to look at how we can substantively improve elections for all residents of Harris County and all Texans. This is one of the things that the current Election Administrator's office has been actively doing as a part of their process improvement and is a practice all of our elected officials and government department heads should employ regularly. We will be actively reaching out to Senator Bettencourt and look forward to the dialogue and actions that will follow.

Charles Simmons

Self. Engineer.

Salado, TX

Return control of elections to an elected official responsible to the public and not a hidden person only responsible to others.

Devorah Smolins, Mrs

NCJW

Houston, TX

I'm a Harris County resident, and I oppose SB 1750. This bill is bad because there were problems in the November election, but SB 1750 isn't the solution. The solution is more resources and funding for elections administration.

Niloufar Hafizi
self/Emgage Action
Katy, TX

My name is Niloufar Hafizi and I represent myself and Emgage Action, a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to engaging and empowering Muslim Americans. I urge you to vote "no" on SB 1750. If it were to become law, SB 1750 would make elections administration more inefficient in the only county it applies to.

I am a VDVR in Harris County, where I frequently do voter outreach. Harris is a county larger in population size than almost half of the states in the U.S.A. To have more smoothly run elections, Harris County needs a dedicated, properly funded, and adequately staffed Elections Administration Office (EAO). It does not need to have elections administration put back in the Harris County Clerk and Tax Assessor's office and run by an appointee of the County Clerk. The current system where the Commissioner's Court votes on the Elections Administrator (EA) ensures that a range of elected officials weigh in on who runs elections, and makes the EA accountable to a five-person body with representation from across Harris County.

Additionally, SB 1750 would cause logistical chaos as Houston prepares to have city elections this fall. SB 1750 as written would go into effect in September; if it were to pass, it would cause the County Clerk's office to have to reconfigure to absorb the EAO and then prepare for early voting in less than two months. Such a timeline is unrealistic, and the legislature should not compel elections administration to reorganize on such a timeline. If reconfiguration is going to happen, any major changes to elections administration should occur after 2024, a presidential election year where turnout in primaries and the general election will be higher. Voters will be adversely affected by any administrative overhaul in 2023 or 2024.

Harris County has always faced election difficulties due to the number of voters it has to serve. Harris County, unlike other counties in Texas, also serves voters in four different languages. The task of administering voter registration and elections in Harris County is an enormous and complicated task. When problems occur, the legislature's response should be to find the facts on why problems occurred and support solutions. Moreover, some of the alleged problems used to argue in favor of SB 1750 have been overblown or are erroneous, as this Houston Chronicle investigation shows:

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/houston/article/harris-county-ballot-paper-shortage-investigation-17849980.php>

The difficulties Harris County has experienced far predate the formation of the EAO. Long lines, malfunctioning equipment, inadequate resources and staffing, and other issues occurred even when elections administration was housed within the County Clerk's office. To support smooth elections, this committee should ensure the EAO has a chance to show what a centralized election office can do -- not eliminate it shortly before a major election.

John Pritchett
Pritchett Holdings
Houston, TX

I support passage Of SB 1750 by Bettencourt.

Douglas Long, Mr
Self
San Angelo, TX

This bill should be about providing money to conduct elections. Solve problems without targeting individuals of the opposite political party. Allow elections for everyone, not just those of one political party.

Joy Davis
Pure Justice Action Fund
Houston, TX

My name is Joy Davis and I am the field organizer representing Pure Justice Action Fund. We oppose this bill. Elections administrators play a crucial role in ensuring fair, transparent, and efficient elections. Elections administrators are trained professionals with expertise and experience in managing elections. They are familiar with the laws and they know how to deal with various issues that may arise. They are neutral and unbiased. They are not aligned with any political party. They are committed to ensuring that the election process is fair and impartial. They are responsible from voter registration to vote counting. The role of elections administrators is critical in maintaining voter confidence in the election process. Getting rid of them would jeopardize the integrity of the election process and undermine public trust in our democracy.

Sarah Syed
Self
Houston, TX

Dear Committee Members and Chair, my name is Sarah Syed, and I have served as the Presiding Judge of the Early Voting Ballot Board and Signature Verification Committee in Harris County since April 2022 after the primary. Prior to this, I served as the Alternate Judge since Fall 2020. Every election in Harris County, I along with members of our board, are paired with a member of another party to ensure fairness and integrity. I am a Harris County resident, and I oppose Senate Bill 1750 and am against it passing.

I have personally worked with two Election Administrators' (EA) and their respective office across party lines to help identify any potential problems or bottlenecks in the process and co-develop solutions to address them as it relates to processing of mail-in ballots, federal ballots, military email ballots, FPCA ballots, provisional ballots, and intentional outreach and education to voters. With the creation of an EA, it has significantly reduced wait times at polling places, ensured that all votes are counted in a timely manner in accordance with the Secretary of State, and streamlined any processes in a transparent way.

The EA is a designated office committed to uplifting and capacity building for our elections and was created out of the growing need in Harris County to ensure that the election process is free from any potential conflicts of interest or partisan bias. This is especially important because voters need to have confidence that their votes will be counted accurately, regardless of their political affiliation or views.

This bill would undermine the integrity of our electoral system by placing the responsibilities of conducting elections back onto the County Clerk and Tax Assessor-Collector's offices. More over, it is essential to expand the budget for the EA to include additional training for language access, effective ADA communication, and recruitment of translators / interpreters. All eligible voters deserve equal access to the ballot box, regardless of their language proficiency, indigenous language, or differently abled capabilities. Without proper training and resources, the County Clerk and Tax Assessor-Collector's office may struggle to provide these accommodations, ultimately resulting in a less democratic and less equitable electoral process.

Having an Elections Administrator in Harris County is essential for ensuring that our democratic process is fair, transparent, and efficient. Harris County voters deserve one office that can be held accountable for successfully supporting voter access and running our elections. Local voters should decide how our elections are run. This bill will set us behind.

The solution is more resources and funding for the EA and to keep the EA role. Texans look to Harris County for best practices and leadership. It is your responsibility to listen to Harris County Voters, and Election Workers doing the work.

Please vote NO on Senate Bill 1750.

Thank you.