

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 342
By: Hayes
Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

S.B. 924 from the 88th Regular Session updated provisions in the Election Code related to combining election precincts. While S.B. 924 made improvements in this area of state law, the author has informed the committee that it inadvertently removed an important provision allowing political parties to combine precincts during primary elections to avoid unreasonable expenditures for election equipment, supplies, and personnel. H.B. 342 seeks to address this issue by providing for a county commissioners court and the county executive committees of political parties to combine county election precincts under certain circumstances.

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

H.B. 342 amends the Election Code to authorize the following entities to combine county election precincts to avoid unreasonable expenditures for election equipment, supplies, and personnel if changes in county election precinct boundaries to give effect to a redistricting plan result in precincts with fewer than 500 registered voters:

- a commissioners court, for a general or special election; or
- for a primary election, the county executive committee of a political party conducting the primary election.

The bill authorizes precincts in a county with a minimum population of 250,000 to also be combined in that manner if the changes result in county election precincts with not fewer than 500 and not more than 750 registered voters. The bill subjects a precinct combined under the bill's provisions to the statewide population cap prescribed under applicable statutory provisions and to the prohibition against establishing a combined precinct resulting in certain adverse effects to a group covered by the federal Voting Rights Act.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.