

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 3697
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Elections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill author has informed the committee that the requirement in current law for early voting ballot applications to be printed in six-point font poses a significant accessibility issue, as that font size is exceptionally small. The bill author has also informed the committee that in addition to the readability challenges presented by these formatting requirements, particularly for older adults and those with visual impairments, the lack of standardization regarding paper color and text color across counties creates inconsistency in the voting experience, which can cause confusion and potentially create barriers to participation for voters who travel or relocate within the state. H.B. 3697 seeks to address this issue by establishing uniform formatting requirements for balloting materials for an early voting ballot to be voted by mail.

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. 3697 amends the Election Code to require additional balloting materials for an early voting ballot to be voted by mail, including the applicable instructions, to be printed in at least 12-point type and in black text on a white background. The bill also requires the officially prescribed application form for such a ballot to be printed in black text on a white background and increases the form's minimum type size from at least 6-point to at least 12-point. The bill applies only to an election ordered on or after the bill's effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.