

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
89R904 MPF-F

S.B. 985  
By: Bettencourt; Paxton  
State Affairs  
3/5/2025  
As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

During the 88th Legislative Session, the legislature passed S.B. 924. Unfortunately, due to an amendment added to the bill, unintended consequences have impacted elections throughout the state regarding combining election precincts.

S.B. 985 amends the election code to allow for county election precincts with fewer than 500 registered voters to be combined to avoid unreasonable expenditures for a general or special election or a primary election. This bill also allows for a county with a population of no less than 250,000 people to be combined as long as it results in county election precincts with more than 500 but less than 750 registered voters.

Lastly, S.B. 985 allows for a county with a population of less than 1.2 million that does not participate in countywide polling to combine precincts as long as the precinct does not contain more than 10,000 registered voters.

As proposed, S.B. 985 amends current law relating to the combination of certain election precincts.

### **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) Authorizes a commissioners court for a general or special election, or for a primary election the county executive committee of a political party conducting a primary election, if changes in county election precinct boundaries to give effect to a redistricting plan result in county election

precincts with fewer than 500 registered voters, to combine county election precincts notwithstanding Section 42.005 (Relationship to Districts and Justice and Commissioners Precincts) to avoid unreasonable expenditures for election equipment, supplies, and personnel. Deletes existing text providing that this section applies only to a county with a population of less than 1.2 million that does not participate in the countywide polling place program described by Section 43.007 (Countywide Polling Place Program).

(b) Authorizes county election precincts in a county with a population of not less than 250,000 to also be combined under Subsection (a) if the changes result in county election precincts with not fewer than 500 and not more than 750 registered voters.

(c) Provides that a combined precinct under Subsection (a) or (b) is subject to the maximum population prescribed for a precinct under Section 42.006.

(d) Redesignates existing Subsection (a-1) as Subsection (d). Authorizes the commissioners court of a county with a population of less than 1.2 million that does not participate in the countywide polling place program described by Section 43.007, in a general or special election for which use of county election precincts is required, to, on the recommendation of the county election board, combine county election precincts notwithstanding Section 42.005 certain conditions are met.

(e) Redesignates existing Subsection (c) as Subsection (e). Prohibits a combined precinct under Subsection (d), rather than under this section, from containing more than 10,000 registered voters.

(f) Redesignates existing Subsection (d) as Subsection (f) and makes no further changes.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2025.