

- SUBJECT:** Requiring temporary polling places to be open throughout early voting
- COMMITTEE:** Elections — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Klick, Burrows, Cain, Middleton, Swanson
4 nays — Cortez, Bucy, Fierro, Israel
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Alan Vera, Harris County Republican Party Ballot Security Committee; Russell Hayter)
Against — Glen Maxey, Texas Democratic Party; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Cinde Weatherby, League of Women Voters of Texas)
On — Christina Adkins, Secretary of State; Chris Davis, Texas Association of Elections Administrators
- BACKGROUND:** Election Code sec. 85.062 allows commissioners courts and the governing bodies of political subdivisions to establish temporary branch polling places, which are separate from main early voting polling places.
Sec. 85.064 requires that temporary branch polling places be open for voting on the same days as main early voting polling places. The authority that established the temporary branch polling place determines the hours the branch polling place is open. This section applies only to an election in which the territory served by the early voting clerk is situated in a county with a population of 100,000 or more.
- DIGEST:** HB 1888 would require temporary branch polling places to be open on the days that main early voting polling places were open and to remain open for at least:
- eight hours each day; or
 - three hours each day if the city or county clerk did not serve as the early voting clerk for the territory holding the election, and the territory had fewer than 1,000 registered voters.

The bill would repeal the provision limiting the applicability of these requirements to counties with populations of 100,000 or more.

HB 1888 also would limit the elections for which certain political subdivisions were required to use regular county election precincts to elections held on the November uniform election date.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1888 would require temporary branch polling places to remain open at set locations throughout the early voting period, which would prevent election officials from using temporary branch polling places to target certain populations on certain days or at specific times to the exclusion of others. In requiring these polling places to remain open at a single location throughout early voting, the bill also would increase the polling places' accessibility to voters and encourage the maximum number of voters to participate in the election.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1888 would prohibit legitimate uses of mobile voting that allowed rural populations, senior citizens, and others to vote easily. Temporary branch polling places allow for convenient voting in remote parts of rural counties, senior citizen communities, and other areas. They are often kept open only for a portion of the early voting period, then closed once there is no longer demand to vote. HB 1888 would require temporary branch polling places to remain open throughout the early voting period, even when it did not make financial sense to do so. This could lead to certain temporary branch polling places not being opened at all, which could make voting more difficult for some populations.