
State Government Committee

HB 2853

Brief Description: Addressing certification requirements for elections administrators.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins and S. Hunt.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes qualifications for elections professionals who may participate in certification programs offered by the Secretary of State (SOS).
- Requires the SOS to keep training program costs competitive and comparable to other states and accredited programs.

Hearing Date: 2/3/16

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

An employee working in an elections management position must be certified as an election administrator through the Office of the Secretary of State (SOS) certification program. Positions requiring certification from the SOS include county elections administrators, the SOS elections personnel, and any other person or group designated by the SOS and the Election Administration and Certification Board (EACB) in rule. County auditors must have at least two certified administrators on staff.

The EACB membership includes the SOS, the Director of Elections, four county auditors, four legislators, and one representative from each major political party. The EACB shares joint powers and duties with the SOS to adopt rules governing the training of elections observers, procedures for conducting election reviews and appeals, and the training and certification of elections professionals.

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To become certified, administrators must complete mandatory training and testing provided by the SOS. There are two statutory minimum qualifications for participants in the training: a high school diploma or equivalent and knowledge of election rules and laws.

The SOS and EACB have established additional minimum qualifications for participants in rule. These include completing at least two years of service during the three-year period prior to the certification test and 40 hours of participation in professional conferences and workshops. If the SOS denies a certification, a person may petition for reconsideration. If the SOS denies a petition for reconsideration, the petitioner may appeal to the EACB. The EACB may reverse or support the decision made by the SOS.

Ongoing professional education and certification for elections administrators is also available through some institutions of higher education and the National Association of Election Officials, a nonprofit organization.

Summary of Bill:

Qualifications for elections professionals who may participate in the SOS certification program are established as either:

- two or more years of experience in election law, election administration, election campaigning or consulting, membership on an elections canvassing board, service as an elected precinct officer or elections observer for a major political party, service as an elected official, or employment as professional staff to an elected official;
- completion of college coursework in elections administration or a closely related subject;
- certification from another state, for state residents; or
- a compelling petition presented by a state resident to the SOS for inclusion in the certification program.

The SOS may not require additional qualifications for participants and must keep the costs of training and certificate programs competitive and comparable to other states and accredited programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 01/27/16.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.