

Bill Summary
2nd Session of the 60th Legislature

Bill No.:	SB 1583
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Author:	Sen. Kirt
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Bill Analysis

SB 1583 creates the Oklahoma Voting Rights Act. The measure provides that any law, regulation, or ordinance relating to voting shall be construed or applied liberally in favor of a voter's exercise of the right of suffrage. The measure prohibits any political subdivision from adopting or applying a qualification for eligibility to vote or other prerequisite to voting, adopt a policy relating to vote administration, or take any other action or fail to take any action that results in a denial or abridgement of the right to vote by a member of a protected class. Such entities are also prohibited from enforcing any method of election that has the effect of impairing the equal opportunity or ability of members of a protected class to nominate or elect candidates of their choice. The measure specifies that a proposed district-based plan that provides protected class members with one or more reasonably configured districts shall not be required to show that members of a protected class comprise a majority of the total population.

The measure directs courts to consider the combined electoral preferences of a protected class as well as any history of discrimination, the extent to which members of the protected class are disadvantaged, voting rates, the use of racial appeals, the rate of elected members of a protected class to political office, barriers to support, polarized voting, lacking responses from political officials, state interests, and other factors deemed relevant by the court. The courts are prohibited from considering the number of protected class members not burdened by the challenged qualification, the pedigree and widespread use of a disqualification, identical disqualifications, other forms of voting unimpacted by the disqualification, criminal activity on individual voters if those crimes have not occurred in the political subdivision in substantial numbers, and mere invocation of interest. The measure also establishes filing requirements for actions relating to the provisions of the measure. The measure establishes a cumulative reimbursement rate of \$30,000.00 for all parties affected by a prohibited disqualification.

Prepared by: Kalen Taylor