

ELECTION CODE

TITLE 16. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

CHAPTER 273. CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AND OTHER ENFORCEMENT

PROCEEDINGS

SUBCHAPTER A. CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

Sec. 273.001. INVESTIGATION OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT. (a) If two or more registered voters of the territory covered by an election present affidavits alleging criminal conduct in connection with the election to the county or district attorney having jurisdiction in that territory, the county or district attorney shall investigate the allegations. If the election covers territory in more than one county, the voters may present the affidavits to the attorney general, and the attorney general shall investigate the allegations.

(b) A district or county attorney having jurisdiction or the attorney general may conduct an investigation on the officer's own initiative to determine if criminal conduct occurred in connection with an election.

(c) On receipt of an affidavit under Section [15.028](#), the county or district attorney having jurisdiction and, if applicable, the attorney general shall investigate the matter.

(d) On referral of a complaint from the secretary of state under Section [31.006](#), the attorney general may investigate the allegations.

(e) Not later than the 30th day after the date on which a county or district attorney begins an investigation under this section, the county or district attorney shall deliver notice of the investigation to the secretary of state. The notice must include a statement that a criminal investigation is being conducted and the date on which the election that is the subject of the investigation was held. The secretary of state may disclose information relating to a criminal investigation received under this subsection only if the county or district attorney has disclosed the information or would be required by law to disclose the information.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 728, Sec. 78, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 916, Sec. 26, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1290, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 273.002. LOCAL ASSISTANCE TO ATTORNEY GENERAL. For an election in which the attorney general is conducting an investigation, the attorney general may:

(1) direct the county or district attorney serving a county in the territory covered by the election to conduct or assist the attorney general in conducting the investigation; or

(2) direct the Department of Public Safety to assist in conducting the investigation.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

Sec. 273.003. IMPOUNDING ELECTION RECORDS. (a) In the investigation of an election, a county or district attorney or the attorney general may have impounded for the investigation the election returns, voted ballots, signature roster, and other election records.

(b) To have election records impounded, the investigating officer must apply to a district court for an order placing the election records in the court's custody for examination by the officer.

(c) The application for impoundment must be filed with the district court of the county in which the election was held or an adjoining county. An application for records of a statewide election may be filed in the county in which the election was held, an adjoining county, or Travis County.

(d) On the filing of an application, the district judge shall issue an order impounding the records in a secure place under the terms and conditions the judge considers necessary to keep them under the judge's custody and control during the examination and for any additional time the judge directs.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 864, Sec. 254, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 273.004. EXAMINATION OF IMPOUNDED RECORDS. (a) The examination of impounded election records shall be conducted in the same manner as a court of inquiry.

(b) Impounded election records must be examined in the presence of the district judge ordering the impoundment or a grand jury, as provided by the judge's order.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

SUBCHAPTER B. PROSECUTION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL

Sec. 273.021. PROSECUTION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL AUTHORIZED.

(a) The attorney general may prosecute a criminal offense prescribed by the election laws of this state.

(b) The attorney general may appear before a grand jury in connection with an offense the attorney general is authorized to prosecute under Subsection (a).

(c) The authority to prosecute prescribed by this subchapter does not affect the authority derived from other law to prosecute the same offenses.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1993, 73rd Leg., ch. 728, Sec. 79, eff. Sept. 1, 1993; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 864, Sec. 255, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 273.022. COOPERATION WITH LOCAL PROSECUTOR. The attorney general may direct the county or district attorney serving the county in which the offense is to be prosecuted to prosecute an offense that the attorney general is authorized to prosecute under Section [273.021](#) or to assist the attorney general in the prosecution.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

Sec. 273.023. SUBPOENA. (a) A subpoena or subpoena duces tecum issued in connection with a prosecution under this subchapter is effective if served anywhere in this state.

(b) A witness may not be punished for failure to comply with a subpoena issued under this subchapter unless the proper fees are tendered to the witness as required by statute or court rule.

(c) The attorney general may direct the Department of Public Safety to serve a subpoena under this subchapter.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

Sec. 273.024. VENUE. An offense under this subchapter may be prosecuted in the county in which the offense was committed or an adjoining county. If the offense is committed in connection with a statewide election, the offense may be prosecuted in the county in which the offense was committed, an adjoining county, or Travis County.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

SUBCHAPTER C. EXAMINATION OF BALLOTS BY GRAND JURY

Sec. 273.041. REQUEST TO EXAMINE BALLOTS. In the investigation of criminal conduct in connection with an election, a grand jury, on finding probable cause to believe an offense was committed, may request a district judge of the county served by the grand jury to order an examination of the voted ballots in the election.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1078, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1315, Sec. 56, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 273.042. ORDER BY DISTRICT JUDGE. On request of a grand jury for an examination of voted ballots, a district judge may order the custodian of the ballots and the custodian of the keys to the ballot boxes to deliver the ballot boxes and the keys to the grand jury.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1078, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1315, Sec. 56, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

Sec. 273.043. CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION. The examination of ballots under this subchapter shall be conducted in secret before the grand jury.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by

Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1078, Sec. 22, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1315, Sec. 56, eff. Jan. 1, 2004.

SUBCHAPTER D. MANDAMUS BY APPELLATE COURT

Sec. 273.061. JURISDICTION. (a) The supreme court or a court of appeals may issue a writ of mandamus to compel the performance of any duty imposed by law in connection with the holding of an election or a political party convention, regardless of whether the person responsible for performing the duty is a public officer.

(b) The court of criminal appeals may issue a writ of mandamus to compel the performance of any duty imposed by law in connection with the provision, sequestration, transfer, or impoundment of evidence in or records relating to a criminal investigation conducted under this code or conducted in connection with the conduct of an election or political party convention. If a writ of mandamus is issued under this subsection, it shall include an order requiring the provision, sequestration, transfer, or impoundment of the evidence or record.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., 2nd C.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 1), Sec. 8.04, eff. December 2, 2021.

Sec. 273.062. PROCEEDING TO OBTAIN WRIT. A proceeding to obtain a writ of mandamus under this subchapter shall be conducted in accordance with the rules pertaining to original proceedings of the court in which the petition is filed.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.

Sec. 273.063. VENUE IN COURT OF APPEALS. (a) A petition to a court of appeals for a writ of mandamus under this subchapter must be filed with the court specified by this section.

(b) A petition pertaining to an election must be filed with the court of the court of appeals district in which:

(1) the respondent resides, or in which one of them

resides if there is more than one respondent, if the election is statewide; or

(2) the territory covered by the election is wholly or partly situated, if the election is not statewide.

(c) A petition pertaining to a political party convention must be filed with the court of the court of appeals district in which:

(1) the respondent resides, or in which one of them resides if there is more than one respondent, for a state convention;

(2) the territory represented by the convention delegates is wholly or partly situated, for a district convention; or

(3) the precinct or county is situated, for a precinct or county convention.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986. Amended by Acts 1987, 70th Leg., ch. 54, Sec. 15(c), eff. Sept. 1, 1987.

SUBCHAPTER E. INJUNCTION

Sec. 273.081. INJUNCTION. A person who is being harmed or is in danger of being harmed by a violation or threatened violation of this code is entitled to appropriate injunctive relief to prevent the violation from continuing or occurring.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 211, Sec. 1, eff. Jan. 1, 1986.