



Testimony on SB 7,

Proposed Legislation relating to elections, including election integrity and security; creating a criminal offense; providing civil penalties.

By: James Slattery, Senior Staff Attorney, Texas Civil Rights Project

Texas Senate State Affairs Committee, March 26, 2021

Chair Hughes, Vice Chair Birdwell, and Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee,

Unsurprisingly, SB 7 would have a discriminatory impact on historically marginalized groups. Limiting voting hours and flexibility in polling locations would disproportionately harm communities of color, who tend to have less flexible work schedules. Attached to my written testimony are three charts showing, by significant margins, that the voters who used the extended voting hours and drive thru voting in Harris County were more likely to be people of color than early voters as a whole.

The racial and ethnic impact of SB7 further extends to its assistance provisions, and the same provisions discriminate against voters with disabilities. Non-English speakers and voters with disabilities often use assistants to vote. SB7 would allow poll watchers to intimidate these voters by recording them. It would also breach these voters' privacy in a major way by documenting to the whole world the reason they required assistance. Now, through PIA requests, anybody would be able to know intimate details about disabled and non-English voters.. We only have to look to the recent incidents of violence against Asian Americans in this country to see why a person might feel intimidated by these provisions and choose instead to simply not vote.

In addition to the intended negative impacts of SB 7, there are many unintended consequences.

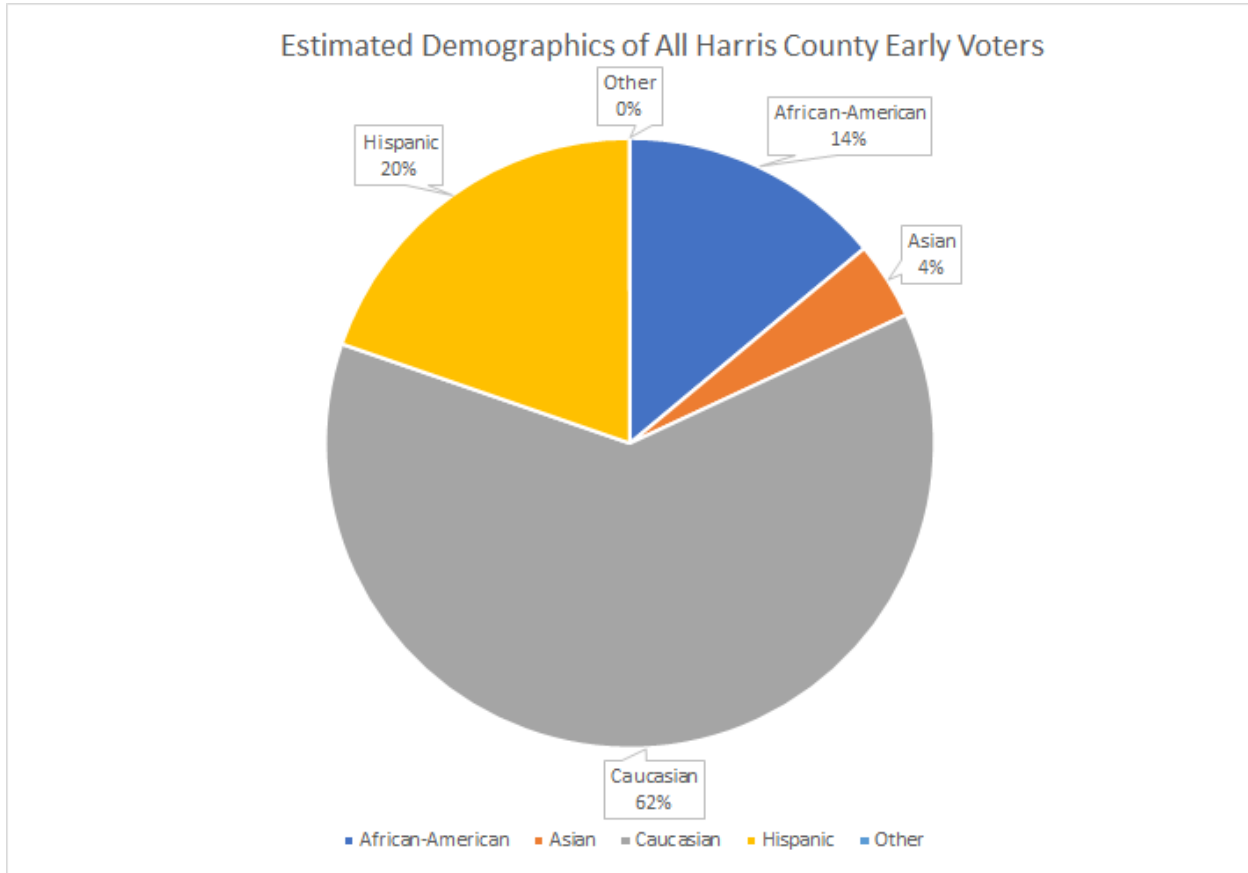
Through poor design, SB 7 would inject incredible risk by requiring every electronic device "that is necessary to count votes" in central counting to be equipped with software that automatically sends a log to the Secretary of State. This would create a network connection at the most critical juncture of vote counting. As recent storms demonstrated, state technology infrastructure is often underfunded. This provision would practically invite hackers into the counting room.

Two minutes is hardly enough time to go through all the negative impacts of a bill as broad as SB7, but I would be happy to answer any questions.



TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT

Chart 1 of 3

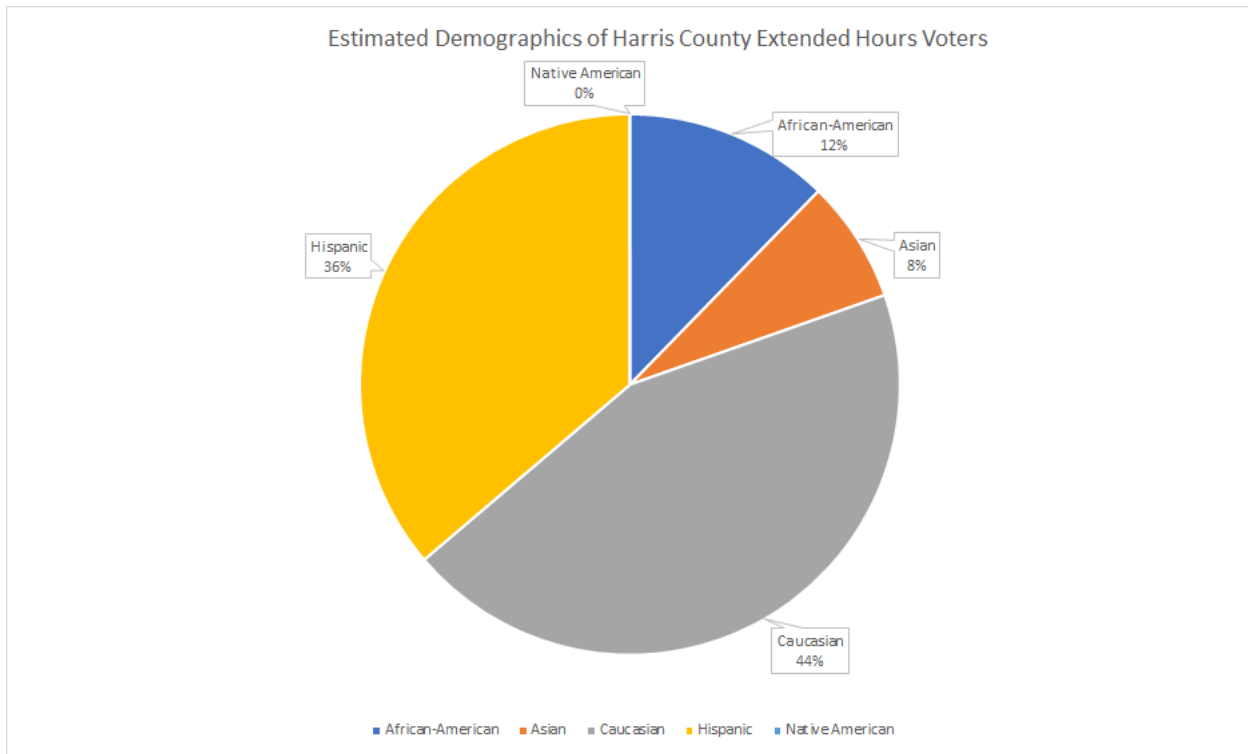


Source: Harris County Early Voting Rosters; Targetsmart for race/ethnicity modeling



TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT

Chart 2 of 3

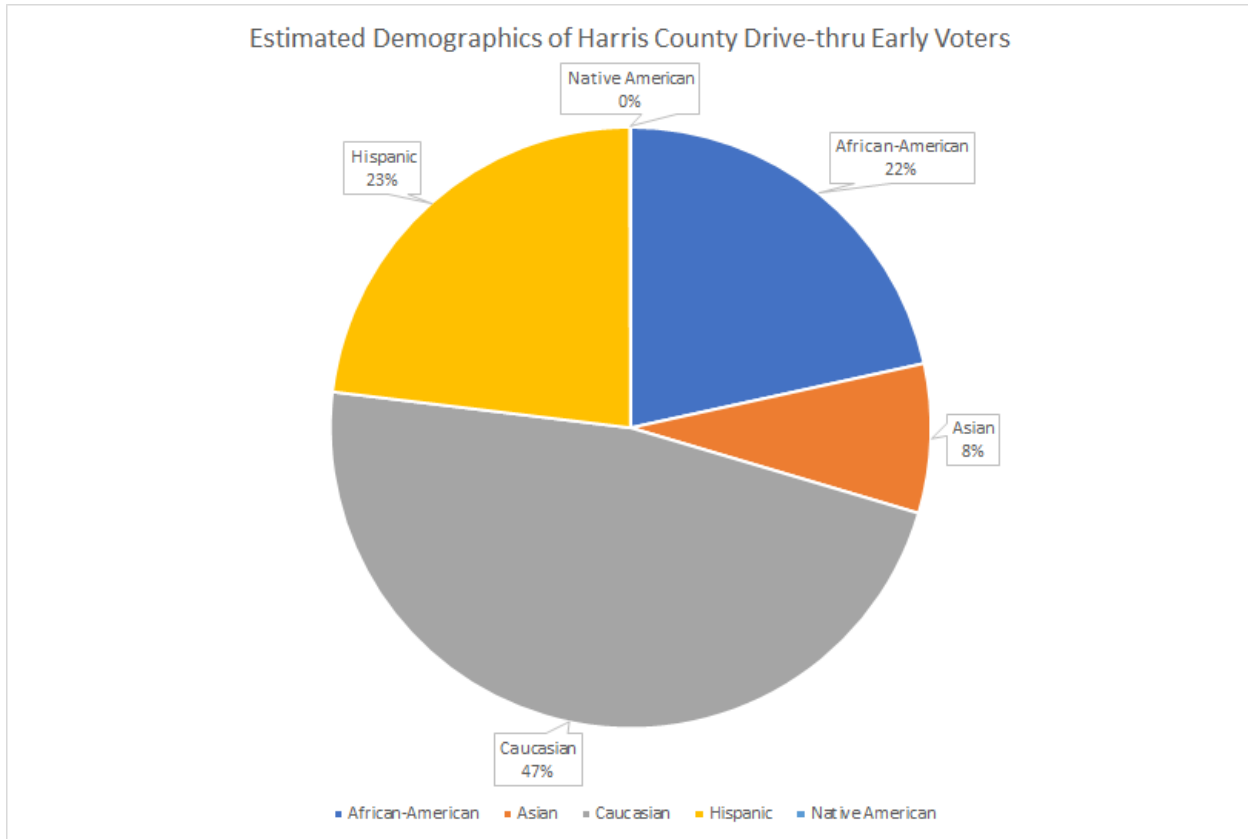


Source: Harris County Early Voting Rosters; Targetsmart for race/ethnicity modeling



TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT

Chart 3 of 3



Source: Harris County Early Voting Rosters; Targetsmart for race/ethnicity modeling