

- SUBJECT:** Reducing concealed handgun license fees for military veterans
- COMMITTEE:** Law Enforcement — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Driver, Latham, Allen, Frost, Ortiz, Vo, West
0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Tara Mica, National Rifle Association; Alice Tripp, Texas State Rifle Association)
Against — None
On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jan Coffey, Texas Department of Public Safety)
- BACKGROUND:** Government Code, sec. 411.174 requires an applicant for a concealed handgun license to submit a nonrefundable application and license fee of \$140 to the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Government Code, sec. 411.181 sets a \$25 fee for issuing a duplicate license after a change of name or address. Government Code, sec. 411.185 allows DPS by administrative rule to set the fee for license renewal, which currently is \$70.

Government Code, secs. 411.194 and 411.195 require DPS to charge half of the normal licensing fee to indigents and senior citizens, respectively. In 2005, the 79th Legislature enacted HB 322 by Hupp, et al., adding Government Code, sec. 411.1951 to include members of the U.S. armed forces, including the reserves, national guard, or state guard, on the list of those eligible to pay half of the normal licensing fee for concealed handgun licenses.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 954 would amend Government Code, sec. 411.1951 to allow retired and honorably discharged veterans to receive the 50 percent military discount on all fees associated with acquiring a concealed handgun license. Eligibility would be based on past service in the U.S. military, state and national guards, and their auxiliaries.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 954 would extend to honorably discharged veterans the same fee discounts for concealed handgun permits granted to active members under current law. This appropriately would allow the state to honor not just those who currently are defending our country but also those who have defended our freedom in the past. The bill would be a small token of appreciation for those who have risked their lives in defense of our democracy. In addition, it would allow those fighting today to continue to benefit from the reduced fee after they completed active duty.

Although the language in HB 954 appears in another bill that has been approved by the House, there is no guarantee that HB 233 — which contains other provisions — will be enacted. HB 954 creates another opportunity for the Legislature to honor Texas veterans with a reduced permit fee.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Reducing concealed handgun license fees would cost the state revenue and require DPS to hire new employees to process and evaluate these applications and renewals, which likely would increase if the license fee were reduced.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 954 give veterans a complete fee waiver akin to the full waiver proposed for active-duty and recently discharged soldiers under HB 233 by Ritter, which recently passed the House. Veterans should receive the same privileges and exemptions afforded today's soldiers, who will soon be veterans themselves.

NOTES:

The Legislative Budget Board estimates that CSHB 954 would cost the state \$337,000 in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09 due to reduced application fees. An additional \$201,000 from Fund 6 would go to DPS over this period to pay for additional staff and other increased costs.

The committee substitute added a definition of "veteran" to sec. 411.1951 that does not appear in the bill as introduced.

HB 233 by Ritter would waive all concealed handgun license fees for current members of the military and those honorably discharged within a year prior to applying for the license. It also includes the same provision as CSHB 954 to extend a 50 percent discount on all concealed handgun licensing fees to veterans. HB 233 passed the House on April 4 and has

been referred to the Senate Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Committee.