

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 867
By: Hernandez et al. (Garcia)
Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
5/18/2015
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Interested parties note that female veterans face numerous socioeconomic challenges as they transition to civilian life. The parties assert that the economic and social challenges of Texas' female veterans can be a hindrance to economic growth. H.B. 867 seeks to address these issues and help increase Texas' economic competitiveness.

H.B. 867 amends current law relating to the establishment and operation of the Texas Women Veterans Program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 434, Government Code, by adding Subchapter E, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER E. TEXAS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

Sec. 434.201. DEFINITIONS. Defines "commission," "executive director," "program," and "woman veteran."

Sec. 434.202. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM; PROGRAM MISSION. (a) Provides that the Texas Women Veterans Program (program) is established in the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). Provides that the program is attached to the office of the executive director of TVC (executive director) for administrative purposes.

(b) Provides that the mission of the program is to ensure that the women veterans of this state have equitable access to federal and state veterans' benefits and services.

Sec. 434.203. COORDINATOR. Requires the executive director to designate a women veterans coordinator for this state.

Sec. 434.204. GENERAL PROGRAM DUTIES. Requires that the program:

- (1) provide assistance to the women veterans of this state as provided by this subchapter;
- (2) perform outreach functions to improve the awareness of women veterans of their eligibility for federal and state veterans' benefits and services;
- (3) assess the needs of women veterans with respect to benefits and services;
- (4) review programs, research projects, and other initiatives designed to address the needs of the women veterans of this state;

(5) make recommendations to the executive director regarding the improvement of benefits and services to women veterans; and

(6) incorporate issues concerning women veterans in TVC planning regarding veterans' benefits and services.

Sec. 434.205. **ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS.** (a) Requires that the program advocate for women veterans and work to increase public awareness about the gender-specific needs of women veterans.

(b) Requires that the program recommend legislative initiatives and the development of policies on the local, state, and national levels to address the issues affecting women veterans.

Sec. 434.206. **COLLABORATION.** Requires that the program collaborate with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies that provide services to women veterans.

Sec. 434.207. **RESEARCH; DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.** (a) Requires that the program monitor and research issues relating to women veterans.

(b) Requires that the program disseminate information regarding opportunities for women veterans throughout the network of entities with which the program collaborates.

Sec. 434.208. **EDUCATION.** Requires that the program, through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies, provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran who is applying for grants, benefits, or services.

Sec. 434.209. **HONOR AND RECOGNITION.** Requires that the program promote events and activities that recognize and honor the women veterans of this state and women who serve in the military.

Sec. 434.210. **FACILITIES.** Requires that the program, to the extent funding is available for that purpose, provide facilities as appropriate in support of the program.

Sec. 434.211. **FUNDING.** Authorizes TVC, on behalf of the program, to:

(1) accept and spend funds:

(A) appropriated to TVC for the operation of the program; and

(B) received from other sources, including donations and grants; and

(2) provide matching grants to assist in the implementation of the program's goals and objectives.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 434.017(e), Government Code, to authorize TVC to participate in the establishment and operation of an affiliated nonprofit organization that is established for the purpose of raising money for or providing services or other benefits to TVC or a program established in TVC, including the Texas Women Veterans Program.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.