

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1463
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Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Although the Rio Grande Valley region is home to approximately 45,000 veterans, the Valley has some of the worst wait times for veteran healthcare services. Veterans have to travel more than 200 miles to the closest United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in San Antonio for specialty care. The veteran health care disparity in the Valley has been recognized by the current president, Texas congressmen, and Governor Abbott, who have all called for the creation of a VA hospital in the Valley.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley recently established a medical school in the region with a Smart Hospital equipped with state-of-the-art technology. These resources can be leveraged and lay the foundation for a robust VA hospital that can meet the complex needs of veterans. The VA hospital would complement existing veteran services and result in a comprehensive care system for South Texas veterans.

S.B. 1463 calls for the governor's office to negotiate with the federal government to improve the delivery of health care services to veterans, including the prompt payment of claims and establishment of a VA hospital.

As proposed, S.B. 1463 amends current law relating to improving the delivery of health care services to veterans in this state.

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 Subchapter F, Chapter 401, Government Code, by adding Section 401.103, as follows:

Sec. 401.103. VETERANS HEALTH ISSUES. (1) Authorizes the governor of the State of Texas or the governor's designee to negotiate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and any other appropriate federal agency on matters relating to improving the delivery of health care services to veterans in this state, including:

(1) establishing a veterans hospital in the Rio Grande Valley region of the state; and

(2) ensuring the prompt payment of claims submitted by community health care providers to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for health care services provided to veterans by those providers.

(b) Requires the governor, in consultation with the board of regents of The University of Texas System, to identify shared resources and collaborative opportunities that may be used by the School of Medicine at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to provide quality health care services to residents of the Rio Grande Valley.

(c) Authorizes the governor to request the assistance of the Department of State Health Services, the Health and Human Services Commission, the Texas Veterans Commission (commission), or any other state agency, department, or office in performing an action under this section. Requires the agency, department, or office to provide the requested assistance.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 434.019(a), Government Code, as follows:

(a) Requires the commission and the Department of State Health Services, in collaboration with the office of the governor, to work with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and any other appropriate federal agency to propose that the federal government establish a veterans hospital in the Rio Grande Valley region of the state.

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