

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
85R7019 JSC-F

S.B. 1497  
By: Zaffirini  
Business & Commerce  
3/27/2017  
As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The Office of Injured Employee Counsel (OIEC), an office within the Texas Department of Insurance's Division of Workers' Compensation, staffs its field offices with "ombudsmen," personnel whose role in the agency is to assist claimants in filing claims. Section 404.152(b), Labor Code, provides that, to be eligible for designation as an OIEC ombudsman, a person must, among other requirements, "have at least one year of demonstrated experience in the field of workers' compensation." The OIEC finds this requirement to be an onerous impediment to staffing its 21 field offices throughout the state. Filling an ombudsman vacancy, the agency reports, takes 15 months at minimum, and, with an already limited applicant pool, it becomes increasingly difficult to find a person who is located near where the vacancy exists and who also possesses the requisite year of experience. S.B. 1497 would address this issue and enhance the ability of OIEC to staff its ombudsman offices by eliminating the one-year experience requirement.

As proposed, S.B. 1497 amends current law relating to the eligibility requirements for employment as an ombudsman of the Office of Injured Employee Counsel under the Texas Workers' Compensation Act.

### **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 Section 404.152(b), Labor Code, to delete existing text including the requirement that a person have at least one year of demonstrated experience in the field of workers' compensation in the list of requirements to be eligible for designation as an ombudsman in the Office of Injured Employee Counsel.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.