

SUBJECT: Grants for veterans county service offices from veterans' assistance fund

COMMITTEE: Defense and Veterans' Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Gutierrez, Blanco, Arévalo, Cain, Flynn, Lambert, Wilson
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 9 — 27-4 (Buckingham, Hancock, Nelson, Schwertner)

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: Government Code, sec. 434.032 requires a county with a population of at least 200,000 to maintain a veterans county service office. Sec. 434.017 governs the fund for veterans' assistance, a special fund in the state treasury outside the general revenue fund.

Observers note that some counties do not have adequate funding to maintain their required veterans county service offices.

DIGEST: SB 1679 would require the Texas Veterans Commission to use at least 5 percent of the funds appropriated to it from the fund for veterans' assistance each fiscal year to provide grants to veterans county service offices. The offices would be required to use grant funds for direct assistance and services to veterans living in the counties they serve.

On July 1 of each fiscal year, if the commission had not received enough grant requests from veterans county service offices, the commission could use any of the amount remaining of the 5 percent for any purpose for which it is currently allowed to use the fund for veterans' assistance. The commission could use more than the 5 percent of funds appropriated from the fund to provide grants to veterans county service offices.

The bill would require the Texas Veterans Commission to adopt rules governing the award of grants to veterans county service offices.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2017.