

1-1 By: Shapleigh S.B. No. 655  
1-2 (In the Senate - Filed February 21, 2003; February 27, 2003,  
1-3 read first time and referred to Committee on Veteran Affairs and  
1-4 Military Installations; April 1, 2003, reported adversely, with  
1-5 favorable Committee Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 4,  
1-6 Nays 0; April 1, 2003, sent to printer.)

1-7 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 655 By: Shapleigh

1-8 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
1-9 AN ACT

1-10 relating to members and veterans of the armed forces.  
1-11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:  
1-12 SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by  
1-13 adding Subchapter C to read as follows:  
1-14 SUBCHAPTER C. TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND REQUIREMENTS  
1-15 Sec. 434.101. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:  
1-16 (1) "Commission" means the Texas Veterans Commission.  
1-17 (2) "TexasOnline" has the meaning assigned by Section  
1-18 2054.003.  
1-19 Sec. 434.102. VETERANS WEBSITE. (a) The Department of  
1-20 Information Resources shall establish and maintain on TexasOnline a  
1-21 veterans website. The website must allow veterans to access  
1-22 information on state and federal veterans benefits programs.  
1-23 (b) A state agency that participates in the veterans website  
1-24 is encouraged to allow a veteran to electronically file for state  
1-25 veterans benefits, including the electronic signing of the filing  
1-26 by the veteran and an electronic acknowledgment of the filing.  
1-27 (c) The veterans website may allow a veteran to  
1-28 electronically file for selected federal veterans benefits, as  
1-29 specified by the commission.  
1-30 Sec. 434.103. COMMISSION FORMS. Commission forms shall  
1-31 contain:  
1-32 (1) the veterans website address maintained under  
1-33 Section 434.102; and  
1-34 (2) the commission's toll-free telephone number.  
1-35 Sec. 434.104. BENEFITS BOOKLETS. (a) Not later than  
1-36 February 1 of each even-numbered year, the commission shall create  
1-37 an electronic version of a state veterans benefits booklet and  
1-38 provide a printed copy and an electronic version of the booklet to:  
1-39 (1) each veterans county service officer; and  
1-40 (2) the personnel office of each state or federal  
1-41 military installation in this state.  
1-42 (b) A veterans county service officer is encouraged to  
1-43 distribute a copy of the booklet to any person who claims or will  
1-44 claim Texas as a residence after discharge from the United States  
1-45 armed forces.  
1-46 (c) Each veterans county service officer shall make a copy  
1-47 of the booklet available at the veterans county service office.  
1-48 (d) The commission may update the booklet as necessary.  
1-49 (e) The commission shall provide an electronic version of  
1-50 the booklet on the commission's website.  
1-51 Sec. 434.105. ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO NEWSLETTER OR SERVICES.  
1-52 The commission, with the assistance of the executive director of  
1-53 the Department of Information Resources, may develop and implement  
1-54 a program that uses appropriate computer hardware and software and  
1-55 required training programs to facilitate electronic:  
1-56 (1) delivery of a veterans newsletter; and  
1-57 (2) initiation of veterans benefits claims by veterans  
1-58 county service officers.  
1-59 Sec. 434.106. DONATIONS; COMPUTERS FOR VETERANS COUNTY  
1-60 SERVICE OFFICERS. (a) The commission may accept donated computers  
1-61 from any person, including a governmental entity, and cooperate  
1-62 with that person to establish a program to provide computers at no  
1-63 cost to interested veterans county service officers.  
1-64 (b) A veterans county service officer who obtains a computer

2-1 under this program shall:

2-2 (1) make the computer available to veterans at the  
2-3 veterans county service office; or

2-4 (2) lend the computer to veterans in a manner  
2-5 determined by the officer and approved by the county commissioners  
2-6 court.

2-7 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 656, Government Code, is  
2-8 amended by adding Section 656.027 to read as follows:

2-9 Sec. 656.027. PREFERENCE FOR VETERANS ON STATE EMPLOYMENT  
2-10 FORMS. The commission shall include on all forms relating to state  
2-11 agency employment that are prescribed by the commission under this  
2-12 subchapter or other law a statement regarding the requirement  
2-13 prescribed by Chapter 657 that each state agency give a veterans  
2-14 employment preference until the agency workforce is composed of at  
2-15 least 40 percent veterans.

2-16 SECTION 3. Subchapter C, Chapter 161, Natural Resources  
2-17 Code, is amended by adding Section 161.075 to read as follows:

2-18 Sec. 161.075. INFORMATION FOR LENDING INSTITUTIONS.  
2-19 (a) In this section, "lending institution" has the meaning  
2-20 assigned by Section 161.502.

2-21 (b) On request, the board shall provide to a lending  
2-22 institution information regarding state land and housing benefits  
2-23 programs for veterans in this state.

2-24 SECTION 4. Sections 434.103 and 656.027, Government Code,  
2-25 as added by this Act, apply only to a form printed on or after the  
2-26 effective date of this Act. A form printed before the effective  
2-27 date of this Act is governed by the law as it existed when the form  
2-28 was printed, and the former law is continued in effect for that  
2-29 purpose.

2-30 SECTION 5. Not later than September 1, 2004, the Texas  
2-31 Veterans Commission and the executive director of the Department of  
2-32 Information Resources shall develop and implement the initial  
2-33 program required by Section 434.105, Government Code, as added by  
2-34 this Act.

2-35 SECTION 6. (a) Under the authority granted by Section  
2-36 434.106, Government Code, as added by this Act, the Texas Veterans  
2-37 Commission shall work with the Windham School District to establish  
2-38 a program to provide refurbished computers at no cost to interested  
2-39 veterans county service officers.

2-40 (b) The Texas Veterans Commission and the Windham School  
2-41 District shall jointly determine the quantity of refurbished  
2-42 computers for the program.

2-43 SECTION 7. (a) The secretary of state shall study the  
2-44 feasibility and cost of establishing procedures to allow a person  
2-45 to cast an electronic ballot if the person is:

2-46 (1) a member of the armed forces of the United States  
2-47 who is on active duty overseas; or

2-48 (2) a spouse or dependent of a person described by  
2-49 Subdivision (1) of this subsection who will be outside the United  
2-50 States on election day and during the early voting period for the  
2-51 election.

2-52 (b) As part of the study, the secretary of state shall  
2-53 recommend options to:

2-54 (1) allow the person to request, receive, and send an  
2-55 electronic ballot;

2-56 (2) verify the voter's identity;

2-57 (3) ensure the security of the electronic  
2-58 transmission; and

2-59 (4) meet any other requirements the secretary of state  
2-60 determines necessary.

2-61 (c) Not later than December 1, 2005, the secretary of state  
2-62 shall submit the study, including the recommendations, to the  
2-63 legislature.

2-64 SECTION 8. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
2-65 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
2-66 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
2-67 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
2-68 Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

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