

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2807
By: Morrison
Defense Affairs & State-Federal Relations
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Taps was originally written during the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War by Major General Daniel Butterfield. Over time, Taps went from its origins as an alternative to "Lights Out" to become a signal not only that the day was done, but also to say goodbye to a fallen comrade. Since its first writing in 1862, the playing of Taps at military funeral services has become synonymous with paying final respects to our soldiers who have sacrificed greatly in the defense of Freedom.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of available musicians to perform Taps at military funeral services. HB 2807 would establish a tuition exemption program to allow eligible students to play Taps at military funeral services in exchange from a tuition voucher at an institution of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Veterans Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 434.007 Subsection 9(c)) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1 provides that the Texas Veterans Commission shall establish a program, to issue vouchers to be exchanged for an exemption from the payment of tuition and required fees at an institution of higher education, to students in grades 6 through 12 or at postsecondary educational institutions who sound "Taps" on a bugle, trumpet or cornet during military honors funerals held in this state for deceased veterans. A voucher must be issued in the amount of \$25 for each time a student sounds "Taps" as described by this subsection.

This SECTION also provides that the commission by rule shall design a form for the vouchers and distribute the form, with an explanation of the form's use, to each funeral director in this state for issuance to a person who is eligible to receive a voucher. The commission may not charge a fee for distribution of the form. Furthermore, the commission shall encourage a private or independent institution of higher education to grant a tuition and fee exemption in exchange for a voucher. The voucher may be used by the student at any time and is not transferable.

SECTION 2 provides that a school district may excuse a student in grades 6 through 12 for the purpose of sounding "Taps" at a military honors funeral held in this state for a deceased veteran. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be counted as if the student attended school for the purposes of calculating the average daily attendance of students in the school district. The student shall be allowed a reasonable time to make up school work missed on those days. If the student satisfactorily completes the school work, the day of absence shall be counted as a day of compulsory attendance.

SECTION 3 provides that the governing board of each institution of higher education shall provide a \$25 exemption from tuition and required fees under this chapter to a student in exchange for a voucher.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This Act takes effect immediately if it receives the necessary vote, otherwise it takes effect September 1, 2005.