

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 187
By: Zaffirini
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Tens of thousands of Texans suffer traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries each year. After such injuries, there is only a 12 to 18 month window for a person to derive the most benefit from rehabilitation. A large number of Texans with these injuries end up in nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, state prisons, or become homeless. With adequate rehabilitation, many of these Texans could instead return to work and to their own homes, thus saving taxpayers money and providing a better life for themselves and their families. Many Texans depend on the State's Comprehensive Rehabilitation Fund to receive timely medical care.

The Comprehensive Rehabilitation Fund is a dedicated account derived from court costs. Money in the fund may be used to provide rehabilitation services directly or through public or private resources to individuals determined to be eligible for the services under a vocational rehabilitation program or other program established to provide rehabilitative services. Currently, at the end of each fiscal year, the comptroller is directed to transfer any unexpended balance in the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Fund that exceeds \$500,000 to the General Revenue Fund. Section 111.060(d), Human Resources Code, added last session to provide contingency funding if needed to address the budget crisis existing at the time, would allow the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Fund to be used for general governmental purposes under certain circumstances.

It is vital and cost-effective for this fund to be used for its intended purposes rather than to be diverted for general government purposes. Senate Bill 187 would help achieve that objective.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

Amends Section 111.060(b), Human Resources Code, to require the comptroller, at the end of each state fiscal year, to transfer to the General Revenue Fund any unexpended balance in the comprehensive rehabilitation fund that exceeds \$1,500,000, rather than the unexpended balance exceeding \$500,000 as provided by current law.

Repeals Section 111.060(d), Human Resources Code, which currently permits money in the comprehensive rehabilitation fund to be used for general governmental purposes, if certain criteria are satisfied.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2005.