

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 80TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

May 16, 2007

TO: Honorable Rodney Ellis, Chair, Senate Committee on Government Organization

FROM: John S. O'Brien, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: HB3426 by Flynn (Relating to the continuation and functions of the Texas Veterans Commission and to certain veterans issues.), **As Engrossed**

No significant fiscal implication to the State is anticipated.

The bill would continue the Texas Veterans Commission (Commission) for six years.

The bill would require the commission to improve its rulemaking process, enabling the Commission to respond to changes in its mission and the veterans it serves.

The bill would require the members of the Texas Veterans Commission to complete training on a number of aspects of the commission before assuming their duties.

The bill would require the Commission to develop criteria and specific procedures for administering claims assistance services.

The bill would require the Commission to collect certain information, including the status and quality of health care in certain veteran facilities, other than veterans homes, operated by this state, the federal government, or a private entity, by a December 1 of each even-numbered year and report to both houses of the legislature and the governor. The bill would require that the report be made available to the public.

The bill would require the Commission to develop and implement alternative training methods for training veteran service county officers and develop standard course materials, training curriculum, and examinations. The bill would also require that training materials be accessible to veteran service county officers through the internet.

The bill would require that the Commission implement a policy and use appropriate technology solutions to improve the commission's ability to perform its functions.

The bill would establish the Texas Homefront Heroes program to provide temporary financial assistance and other services to family members of active duty personnel.

The bill would create the Homefront Heroes account and allow the Commission to accept grants, gifts, or legislative appropriations from any public or private source and shall deposit these monies to the credit of the Homefront Heroes account.

The bill would require the Commission to establish a Homefront Heroes advisory committee to assist the commission in implementing the program. The bill would require the advisory council be composed of nine members who are family members of active duty personnel and appointed by the Commission. The bill would allow the advisory council to be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses related to the performance of committee duties and reimbursement of expenses is subject to approval by the commission. The bill would require the advisory committee to make recommendations to the Commission regarding the eligibility criteria, the application process, and the services that should be provided under the Homefront Heroes Program, including temporary financial

assistance for recurring expenses, child care services, health care, education, and employment and job training.

The bill would require the Veterans Land Board (Board) to collect information relating to the status and quality of health care provided to veterans in this state through all veterans homes operated by the state or by a private entity under contract with the state to provide the care. The bill would require the Board not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, to publish a report on the status and quality of health care provided through veterans' homes to veterans in this state based on the information collected. The bill would require the board to submit the report to both houses of the legislature and the governor.

The bill would allow the Commission to conduct a study on male and female veterans who return from war in the Afghanistan or Iraq to determine what services are necessary to assist the veterans in their return from the war.

The Veterans Commission estimates a cost of \$320,531 in fiscal year 2008 and a cost of \$295,531 in fiscal year 2009 to implement the provisions of the bill (\$175,000 for a computer-based case management system and \$441,062 for an agency career ladder). However, it is assumed that any changes to current processes and additional duties required by the bill can be performed using available resources within the Veterans Commission.

The cost of the Homefront Heroes program would depend on the scope of the recommendations made by the advisory council.

It is assumed that the costs associated with implementing the provisions of the bill related to the Veterans Land Board can be absorbed with existing resources.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007 and require the Veterans Commission to comply with the provisions of the bill no later than March 1, 2008 and require the commission to report to the Sunset Advisory Commission the status of implementing non-statutory recommendations no later than November 1, 2008.

Local Government Impact

No fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

Source Agencies: 116 Sunset Advisory Commission, 305 General Land Office and Veterans' Land Board, 403 Veterans Commission

LBB Staff: JOB, MN, ES, MS, EP