

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 2217  
By: Flores  
Defense & Veterans' Affairs  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

In February, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) finalized contracts with Valley Baptist Health System in Cameron County and with South Texas Health System in Hidalgo County to provide inpatient, surgical, emergency, and mental health services to veterans enrolled in the VA benefits program. While this is positive news for veterans in the valley region of Texas, there is still a vital need for a full-fledged veterans hospital. The nearest hospital is approximately 300 miles away in San Antonio, Texas, which, given the rising cost of travel, may be prohibitive for some patients.

H.B. 2217 requires the Texas Veterans Commission and the Department of State Health Services to work with appropriate federal agencies to establish a veterans hospital in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas. The bill allows the state to contribute money, property, and other resources to the establishment, maintenance, and operation of the veterans hospital.

### **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**

H.B. 2217 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Veterans Commission and the Department of State Health Services to work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and any other appropriate federal agency to propose that the federal government establish a veterans hospital in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas. The bill authorizes the state to contribute money, property, and other resources to the establishment, maintenance, and operation of the veterans hospital.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.