

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3951
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Despite the availability of a number of education-related benefits for veterans, such as the G.I. Bill and Hazelwood Act, many veterans are unable to reap their full benefits. Most institutions of higher education have an office of financial aid to assist veterans, but there is no assurance that the employees working in these offices are versed in all the benefits and programs available to veterans.

C.S.H.B. 3951 requires each institution of higher education to ensure that at least one person in the institution's financial aid office is specifically trained to aid veterans and their family members with the education-related benefits available to them. The bill ensures that any veteran who wishes to use the benefits earned by serving our country has the understanding and resources necessary to obtain them.

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

C.S.H.B. 3951 amends the Education Code to require each institution of higher education to ensure that one or more persons employed by the institution is trained in understanding state and federal student financial assistance programs available to military veterans or their family members, especially those specifically applicable to military veterans or their family members, and in assisting military veterans and eligible family members in understanding and obtaining the benefits available under those programs. The bill requires a trained person to be available to assist persons as described during regular business hours at the financial aid or other office to which the person is assigned and requires a public institution of higher education to comply with these provisions not later than January 1, 2010.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 3951 differs from the original by requiring each institution of higher education to ensure that one or more persons employed by the institution is trained in certain veteran matters, whereas the original requires each institution to designate one or more persons trained those areas. The substitute requires a trained person to be available at certain times to assist persons as described, rather than to perform the duties related to the employment described.