

BILL ANALYSIS

H.J.R. 7
By: Flores
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In February 2009, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs finalized contracts with the Valley Baptist Health System in Harlingen and the South Texas Health System in Hidalgo County to provide inpatient, surgical, emergency, and mental health services to veterans enrolled in VA benefit programs. While this is positive news for valley veterans, there is still a vital need for a full-fledged veterans hospital. The nearest existing VA hospital is approximately 300 miles away, in San Antonio, and rising travel costs make the trek too costly for many patients.

H.J.R. 7 proposes an amendment to the Texas Constitution to require the Texas Veterans Commission and the Department of State Health Services to work with the United States 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 the state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

ANALYSIS

H.J.R. 7 proposes an amendment to the Texas Constitution to require the Texas Veterans Commission and the Department of State Health Services to work with the United States 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 the state. The resolution authorizes the state to contribute money, property, and other resources to the establishment, maintenance, and operation of such a veterans hospital, and sets forth the required language for the ballot.

ELECTION DATE

The constitutional amendment proposed by this joint resolution will be submitted to the voters at an election to be held November 3, 2009.