

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1463
By: Lucio
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, there is a lack of outreach to Texas servicemembers and their families regarding possible services and benefits for which they may be eligible. Other than the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) inquiring in its forms for services whether a person is a veteran, and if so identified, referring them to veterans services, there is insufficient outreach, particularly on the Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN).

S.B. 1463 directs the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to the extent possible, to participate in the transition assistance program conducted by the United States Department of Defense and distribute health benefits application forms and answer health care and other benefits-related questions. This bill also requires the Department of State Health Services and the HHSC that each individual who calls TIRN is informed of certain information related to medical or other benefits. S.B. 1463 also directs TVC to cooperate in preparing and maintaining information on the Texas Information and Referral Network.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 434, Government Code, by adding Section 434.019, as follows:

Sec. 434.019. INFORMATION ABOUT VETERANS BENEFITS. Requires the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), to the extent possible, to attend each transition assistance program conducted by the United States Department of Defense in the state and at each transition assistance program, to distribute the application for health benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and answer questions regarding health care and other benefits available to veterans of the United States armed forces.

SECTION 2. Amends the heading to Section 531.093, Government Code, to read as follows:

Sec. 531.093. SERVICES FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND FAMILY OF SERVICEMEMBERS.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 531.093(b), Government Code, to require the executive commissioner Health and Human Services to ensure that each health and human services agency adopts policies and procedures that require the agency to identify certain individuals, rather than servicemembers, who are seeking services from the agency during the agency's intake and eligibility determination process and direct the individuals identified under Subdivision (1), rather than servicemembers seeking services, to appropriate service providers, including the United States Veterans Health Administration, National Guard Bureau facilities, and other federal, state, and local service providers.

SECTION 4. Amends Subchapter U, Chapter 161, Health and Safety Code, by adding Section 161.553, as follows:

Sec. 161.553. VETERANS HEALTH CARE BENEFITS. (a) Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to ensure that each individual who calls the Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN) is

informed that individuals who are servicemembers, spouses of servicemembers, spouses of deceased service members, or dependents of deceased service members may be entitled to medical and other benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Guard Bureau, and other federal, state, and local service providers.

(b) Requires that TIRN provide the name and contact information of each entity that provides benefits to which an individual described by Subsection (a) may be entitled.

(c) Requires TVC to cooperate with DSHS and HHSC in preparing and maintaining the information relating to referrals that is provided through TIRN, as provided by this section.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage or September 1, 2009.