

By: Alonzo

H.B. No. 4121

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to establishing veterans resource centers at certain institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter D to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER D. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS

Sec. 434.151. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Commission" means the Texas Veterans Commission.

(2) "Education regions" means the education regions in this state established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(3) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

Sec. 434.152. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS. The commission shall administer a veterans resource center at at least one institution of higher education in each region specified in Section 434.153 to:

(1) provide a centralized place for veterans to find assistance and information while enrolled at an institution of higher education;

(2) deliver innovative, cost-effective programs to attract veterans and family members of veterans to attend public institutions of higher education;

1 (3) enable institutions of higher education to create
2 veteran-friendly environments; and

3 (4) encourage veterans to take advantage of government
4 educational programs.

5 Sec. 434.153. LOCATIONS OF CENTERS. The commission shall
6 operate 15 veterans resource centers throughout the state with at
7 least one veterans resource center located in each of the following
8 higher education regions:

9 (1) High Plains Region;

10 (2) Northwest Texas Region;

11 (3) Metroplex Region;

12 (4) Upper East Texas Region;

13 (5) Southeast Texas Region;

14 (6) Gulf Coast Region;

15 (7) Central Texas Region;

16 (8) South Texas Region;

17 (9) West Texas Region; and

18 (10) Upper Rio Grande Region.

19 Sec. 434.154. DUTIES OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
20 Each institution of higher education that has a veterans resource
21 center shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the
22 commission. The memorandum of understanding must require the
23 institution of higher education to provide and bear the cost of the
24 following:

25 (1) office space on the campus of the institution of
26 higher education that is accessible to disabled persons and
27 complies with any applicable federal and state law; and

1 (2) office equipment, telephone equipment and
2 service, computer equipment, and Internet access.

3 Sec. 434.155. PROGRAM MANAGER. The commission shall employ
4 a program manager to administer the veterans resource center
5 program. The program manager shall:

6 (1) provide leadership, training, support, and
7 overall management of the veterans resource center program;

8 (2) evaluate the effectiveness of veterans resource
9 centers in identifying the services required by veterans to
10 optimize the success of veterans and their families in obtaining a
11 college education and in providing those services;

12 (3) supervise the regional veterans resource
13 counselors;

14 (4) prepare an annual budget;

15 (5) monitor the outcomes of the veterans resource
16 center program; and

17 (6) perform any other task as required by the
18 commission.

19 Sec. 434.156. REGIONAL VETERANS RESOURCE COUNSELORS. (a)
20 The commission shall employ a regional veterans resource counselor
21 for each education region to oversee the veterans resource center
22 or centers located in the region.

23 (b) A regional veterans resource counselor shall maintain
24 an office at a veterans resource center at an institution of higher
25 education located in the region served by the veterans resource
26 counselor.

27 (c) Each regional veterans resource counselor shall:

1 (1) visit the institutions of higher education located
2 in the education region served by the veterans resource counselor;

3 (2) work with those institutions of higher education
4 to:

5 (A) create a hospitable and supportive
6 environment for veterans;

7 (B) enhance awareness of and encourage
8 participation in veterans educational programs and commission
9 programs providing other services to veterans, including
10 employment and claims assistance services;

11 (C) develop programs providing ancillary
12 assistance to veterans based on the unique needs of veterans and
13 their families; and

14 (D) ensure that veterans successfully complete
15 their education;

16 (3) work with local, state, and national veterans
17 groups, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American
18 Legion, to promote educational opportunities and benefits to the
19 veteran population in the education region;

20 (4) work with local workforce development boards to:

21 (A) ensure that veterans counselors are aware of
22 available nontraditional educational opportunities, including
23 on-the-job training programs and apprenticeships; and

24 (B) advise employers in the region of potential
25 opportunities to create on-the-job training programs for veterans;

26 (5) work with education services officers at military
27 installations to encourage active duty members of the armed forces

1 of the United States and veterans to use federal and state
2 educational benefits;

3 (6) create and manage publicity campaigns in concert
4 with the commission and institutions of higher education in the
5 education region;

6 (7) support programs to assist combat veteran students
7 in readjusting and reintegrating into a noncombat environment;

8 (8) maintain statistical information regarding
9 demographics of veterans assisted, application success, program
10 completion rates, drop-out rates, and reasons for success or
11 failure, as appropriate; and

12 (9) perform other activities, as assigned by the
13 commission, to enhance the educational opportunities of veterans
14 and their family members in the education region and throughout the
15 state.

16 Sec. 434.157. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY. The commission may
17 adopt rules to implement this subchapter.

18 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2009.