

By: Hernandez Luna, Alvarado, Gonzalez

H.B. No. 3237

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment and operation of the Texas Women Veterans Program.

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. TEXAS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

Sec. 434.151. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

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

(2) "Executive director" means the executive director of the commission.

(3) "Program" means the Texas Women Veterans Program.

(4) "Woman veteran" means a woman who:

(A) served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States or in the Texas National Guard on federal active duty under Title 10, United States Code; and

(B) was discharged or released from that service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Sec. 434.152. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM; PROGRAM MISSION.

(a) The Texas Women Veterans Program is established in the commission. The program is attached to the office of the executive director for administrative purposes.

(b) The mission of the program is to ensure that the women veterans of this state have equitable access to federal and state

1 veterans' benefits and services.

2 Sec. 434.153. COORDINATOR. The executive director shall  
3 designate a women veterans coordinator for this state.

4 Sec. 434.154. GENERAL PROGRAM DUTIES. The program shall:

5 (1) provide assistance to the women veterans of this  
6 state as provided by this subchapter;

7 (2) perform outreach functions to improve the  
8 awareness of women veterans of their eligibility for federal and  
9 state veterans' benefits and services;

10 (3) assess the needs of women veterans with respect to  
11 benefits and services;

12 (4) review programs, research projects, and other  
13 initiatives designed to address the needs of the women veterans of  
14 this state;

15 (5) make recommendations to the executive director  
16 regarding the improvement of benefits and services to women  
17 veterans; and

18 (6) incorporate issues concerning women veterans in  
19 commission planning regarding veterans' benefits and services.

20 Sec. 434.155. ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS. (a) The  
21 program shall advocate for women veterans and work to increase  
22 public awareness about the gender-specific needs of women veterans.

23 (b) The program shall recommend legislative initiatives and  
24 the development of policies on the local, state, and national  
25 levels to address the issues affecting women veterans.

26 Sec. 434.156. COLLABORATION. The program shall collaborate  
27 with federal, state, and private agencies that provide services to

1 women veterans.

2 Sec. 434.157. RESEARCH; DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION. (a)  
3 The program shall monitor and research issues relating to women  
4 veterans.

5 (b) The program shall disseminate information regarding  
6 opportunities for women veterans throughout the network of entities  
7 with which the program collaborates.

8 Sec. 434.158. EDUCATION. Through conferences, seminars,  
9 and training workshops with federal, state, and private agencies,  
10 the program shall provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran  
11 who is applying for grants, benefits, or services.

12 Sec. 434.159. HONOR AND RECOGNITION. The program shall  
13 promote events and activities that recognize and honor the women  
14 veterans of this state and women who serve in the military.

15 Sec. 434.160. FACILITIES. To the extent funding is  
16 available for that purpose, the program shall provide facilities  
17 as appropriate in support of the program.

18 Sec. 434.161. FUNDING. On behalf of the program, the  
19 executive director may accept and spend funds:

20 (1) appropriated to the commission for the operation  
21 of the program; and

22 (2) received from other sources, including donations  
23 and grants.

24 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
25 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
26 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
27 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this

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1 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.