

1-1 By: Van de Putte, Davis S.B. No. 1621
1-2 (In the Senate - Filed March 11, 2011; March 23, 2011, read
1-3 first time and referred to Committee on Veteran Affairs and
1-4 Military Installations; May 2, 2011, reported favorably by the
1-5 following vote: Yeas 3, Nays 1; May 2, 2011, sent to printer.)

1-6 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
1-7 AN ACT

1-8 relating to establishing veterans resource centers at certain
1-9 institutions of higher education.

1-10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-11 SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by
1-12 adding Subchapter D to read as follows:

1-13 SUBCHAPTER D. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS

1-14 Sec. 434.151. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

1-15 (1) "Commission" means the Texas Veterans Commission.

1-16 (2) "Education regions" means the education regions in
1-17 this state established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating
1-18 Board.

1-19 (3) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning
1-20 assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

1-21 Sec. 434.152. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS. The commission
1-22 shall administer a veterans resource center in at least one
1-23 institution of higher education in each region specified in Section
1-24 434.153 to:

1-25 (1) provide a centralized place for veterans to find
1-26 assistance and information while enrolled at an institution of
1-27 higher education;

1-28 (2) deliver innovative, cost-effective programs to
1-29 attract veterans and family members of veterans to attend public
1-30 institutions of higher education;

1-31 (3) enable institutions of higher education to create
1-32 veteran-friendly environments;

1-33 (4) encourage veterans to take advantage of government
1-34 educational programs; and

1-35 (5) assist veterans in applying to public institutions
1-36 of higher education.

1-37 Sec. 434.153. LOCATIONS OF CENTERS. The commission shall
1-38 operate 15 veterans resource centers throughout the state with at
1-39 least one veterans resource center located in each of the following
1-40 higher education regions:

1-41 (1) High Plains Region;

1-42 (2) Northwest Texas Region;

1-43 (3) Metroplex Region;

1-44 (4) Upper East Texas Region;

1-45 (5) Southeast Texas Region;

1-46 (6) Gulf Coast Region;

1-47 (7) Central Texas Region;

1-48 (8) South Texas Region;

1-49 (9) West Texas Region; and

1-50 (10) Upper Rio Grande Region.

1-51 Sec. 434.154. DUTIES OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

1-52 Each institution of higher education that has a veterans resource
1-53 center shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the
1-54 commission. The memorandum of understanding must require the
1-55 institution of higher education to provide and bear the cost of the
1-56 following:

1-57 (1) office space on the campus of the institution of
1-58 higher education that is accessible to disabled persons and
1-59 complies with any applicable federal and state law; and

1-60 (2) office equipment, telephone equipment and
1-61 service, computer equipment, and Internet access.

1-62 Sec. 434.155. PROGRAM MANAGER. The commission shall employ
1-63 a program manager to administer the veterans resource center
1-64 program. The program manager shall:

2-1 (1) provide leadership, training, support, and
 2-2 overall management of the veterans resource center program;
 2-3 (2) evaluate the effectiveness of veterans resource
 2-4 centers in identifying the services required by veterans to
 2-5 optimize the success of veterans and their families in obtaining a
 2-6 college education and in providing those services;
 2-7 (3) supervise the regional veterans resource
 2-8 counselors;
 2-9 (4) prepare an annual budget;
 2-10 (5) monitor the outcomes of the veterans resource
 2-11 center program;
 2-12 (6) using data provided by the Texas Higher Education
 2-13 Coordinating Board, produce an annual report on veterans'
 2-14 attendance at public institutions of higher education;
 2-15 (7) apply to private organizations and foundations for
 2-16 grant funding or other support that complements the objectives of
 2-17 the program; and
 2-18 (8) perform any other task as required by the
 2-19 commission.
 2-20 Sec. 434.156. REGIONAL VETERANS RESOURCE COUNSELORS.
 2-21 (a) The commission shall employ a regional veterans resource
 2-22 counselor for each education region to oversee the veterans
 2-23 resource center or centers located in the region.
 2-24 (b) A regional veterans resource counselor shall maintain
 2-25 an office at a veterans resource center at an institution of higher
 2-26 education located in the region served by the veterans resource
 2-27 counselor.
 2-28 (c) Each regional veterans resource counselor shall:
 2-29 (1) visit the institutions of higher education located
 2-30 in the education region served by the veterans resource counselor;
 2-31 (2) work with those institutions of higher education
 2-32 to:
 2-33 (A) create a hospitable and supportive
 2-34 environment for veterans;
 2-35 (B) enhance awareness of and encourage
 2-36 participation in veterans educational programs and commission
 2-37 programs providing other services to veterans, including
 2-38 employment and claims assistance services;
 2-39 (C) develop programs providing ancillary
 2-40 assistance to veterans based on the unique needs of veterans and
 2-41 their families;
 2-42 (D) ensure that veterans successfully complete
 2-43 their education; and
 2-44 (E) promote the establishment of a student
 2-45 veterans group on each campus in the region;
 2-46 (3) work with local, state, and national veterans
 2-47 groups, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American
 2-48 Legion, to promote educational opportunities and benefits to the
 2-49 veteran population in the education region;
 2-50 (4) work with local workforce development boards to:
 2-51 (A) ensure that veterans counselors are aware of
 2-52 available nontraditional educational opportunities, including
 2-53 on-the-job training programs and apprenticeships; and
 2-54 (B) advise employers in the region of potential
 2-55 opportunities to create on-the-job training programs for veterans;
 2-56 (5) work with education services officers at military
 2-57 installations to encourage active duty members of the armed forces
 2-58 of the United States and veterans to use federal and state
 2-59 educational benefits;
 2-60 (6) create and manage publicity campaigns in concert
 2-61 with the commission and institutions of higher education in the
 2-62 education region to promote the use of education benefits under the
 2-63 federal Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (38
 2-64 U.S.C. Section 3301 et seq.), the tuition exemption program for
 2-65 veterans and their dependents under Section 54.203, Education Code,
 2-66 and any other education benefit for veterans or their dependents
 2-67 under federal or state law;
 2-68 (7) support programs to assist combat veteran students
 2-69 in readjusting and reintegrating into a noncombat environment;

3-1 (8) maintain statistical information regarding
3-2 demographics of veterans assisted, application success, program
3-3 completion rates, dropout rates, and reasons for success or
3-4 failure, as appropriate; and

3-5 (9) perform other activities, as assigned by the
3-6 commission, to enhance the educational opportunities of veterans
3-7 and their family members in the education region and throughout the
3-8 state.

3-9 Sec. 434.157. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY. The commission may
3-10 adopt rules to implement this subchapter.

3-11 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
3-12 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
3-13 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
3-14 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
3-15 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.

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