

By: Van de Putte, Rodriguez

S.B. No. 1796

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of the Texas Veterans Council.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 531, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter S to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER S. TEXAS VETERANS COUNCIL

Sec. 531.751. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

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

(2) "Servicemember" has the meaning assigned by Section 161.551, Health and Safety Code.

Sec. 531.752. TEXAS VETERANS COUNCIL. (a) The Texas Veterans Council is established to:

(1) provide guidance to and coordinate health and human services systems that assist servicemembers and their families;

(2) ensure that servicemembers and their families are aware of and have access to needed services;

(3) improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state, federal, and local agencies and of advisory councils in addressing issues affecting the health and well-being of servicemembers and their families;

(4) prioritize and mobilize resources for servicemembers, including state appropriations for veterans' health and human services; and

1           (5) facilitate an integrated, efficient approach to  
2 identifying and providing outreach to servicemembers and their  
3 families, including web-based outreach and outreach through local  
4 community events.

5           (b) The council shall:

6           (1) promote a common vision of desired outcomes for  
7 servicemembers and their families and encourage shared  
8 accountability for achieving those outcomes;

9           (2) align allocations of resources with  
10 evidence-based policies that promote the health, well-being, and  
11 community reintegration of servicemembers and their families; and

12           (3) sustain, formalize, and guide collaborative  
13 relationships between state, federal, and private agencies and  
14 veterans service organizations.

15           (c) Subject to Subsection (d), the council is composed of  
16 the following:

17           (1) the executive commissioner;

18           (2) the executive director of the Texas Veterans  
19 Commission;

20           (3) the commissioner of the General Land Office;

21           (4) the adjutant general;

22           (5) the director of the Texas Correctional Office on  
23 Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments;

24           (6) a representative of the United States Veterans  
25 Health Administration;

26           (7) at least one licensed physician, licensed  
27 psychologist, or other licensed mental health professional, with

1 demonstrated expert knowledge in the evidence-based treatment of  
2 trauma induced by war, appointed by the executive commissioner;

3 (8) one or more servicemembers appointed by the  
4 executive commissioner who work in the delivery of services to  
5 veterans, active servicemembers, or their families;

6 (9) a representative of the United States Department  
7 of Defense stationed in this state with expert knowledge of the  
8 treatment provided to servicemembers by federal agencies; and

9 (10) other representatives of health and human  
10 services agencies, appointed by the executive commissioner.

11 (d) An individual listed in Subsections (c)(1)-(5) may  
12 designate another individual as having authority to act on behalf  
13 of the individual at council meetings and with respect to council  
14 functions.

15 (e) An organization or agency not represented by an  
16 individual listed in Subsections (c)(1)-(10) that provides  
17 services to servicemembers and their families may participate in  
18 and contribute to the performance of the council's duties through  
19 procedures established by the council.

20 (f) The members of the council annually shall elect one  
21 member to serve as the presiding officer.

22 (g) Council meetings are held at the call of the presiding  
23 officer.

24 (h) The council is administratively attached to the  
25 commission but is independent of direction by the commission or the  
26 executive commissioner. The commission may provide administrative  
27 support and resources to the council as necessary to enable the

1 council to perform its duties.

2 (i) The state agencies represented on the council may  
3 provide staff support as needed to the council.

4 (j) The council is not subject to Chapter 2110.

5 (k) A member of the council is not entitled to compensation,  
6 but is entitled to reimbursement of the member's travel expenses as  
7 provided in the General Appropriations Act for state employees.

8 Sec. 531.753. DUTIES. (a) The council shall:

9 (1) identify appropriations, including appropriations  
10 for initiatives that maximize access to United States Veterans  
11 Health Administration resources, that may be modified in the next  
12 legislative appropriation requests to eliminate waste or increase  
13 available services and, not later than May 1 of each even-numbered  
14 year, prepare a report recommending those modifications for  
15 consideration during the development of the next biennial  
16 legislative appropriations request;

17 (2) promote and coordinate initiatives that guide  
18 servicemembers and their families to appropriate federal, state,  
19 and local resources;

20 (3) identify methods to improve case management  
21 services provided by a veterans county service officer through  
22 additional training, increased productivity, and additional  
23 resources;

24 (4) identify methods to ensure that servicemembers  
25 receive appropriate assessment, diagnoses, and intervention  
26 services;

27 (5) identify and promote effective methods of serving

1 the needs of female servicemembers, including the identification  
2 and treatment of victims of military sexual trauma;

3 (6) identify methods to promote health and  
4 sustainability of the families of servicemembers; and

5 (7) promote servicemember involvement in the planning  
6 and provision of health and human services for servicemembers and  
7 their families.

8 (b) The state agency members of the council may, as  
9 appropriate, enter into memoranda of understanding with other  
10 agencies to implement any method, process, policy, or  
11 recommendation identified or developed under Subsection (a).  
12 Before a method, process, policy, or recommendation is implemented,  
13 the council shall:

14 (1) identify:

15 (A) the timeline and proposed outcome of  
16 implementing the method, process, policy, or recommendation; and

17 (B) benchmarks that may be used to measure the  
18 success of the implementation of the method, process, policy, or  
19 recommendation; and

20 (2) assign to the appropriate members of the council  
21 responsibility for implementing the method, process, policy, or  
22 recommendation.

23 (c) The council may collect data necessary to conduct the  
24 council's duties or implement the council's recommendations and  
25 shall use any reports or information produced by other entities  
26 related to servicemembers and their families to inform the council.

27 Sec. 531.754. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. The council may

1 accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private  
2 source, including grants and other money from the Texas Veterans  
3 Commission, the Department of State Health Services, or other state  
4 agencies and institutions of higher education, to pay expenses  
5 incurred in performing its duties under this subchapter.

6 Sec. 531.755. REPORT BY COUNCIL. Not later than December 1  
7 of each even-numbered year, the council shall submit a report to the  
8 governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of  
9 representatives, and members of the legislature that contains:

10 (1) the requests, plans, and recommendations of the  
11 council, including recommendations of any legislation that is  
12 needed to further develop and maintain a statewide system of  
13 quality health care and human services for servicemembers and their  
14 families; and

15 (2) information regarding the implementation by the  
16 members of the council of any method, process, policy, or  
17 recommendation, including information regarding whether the  
18 implementation has proceeded in accordance with the timeline,  
19 outcome, and benchmarks identified by the council.

20 Sec. 531.756. SUNSET PROVISION. The council is subject to  
21 Chapter 325 (Texas Sunset Act). Unless continued in existence as  
22 provided by that chapter, the council is abolished and this  
23 subchapter expires September 1, 2017.

24 SECTION 2. (a) The executive commissioner of the Health  
25 and Human Services Commission shall appoint the members of the  
26 Texas Veterans Council as required by Sections 531.752(c)(7), (8),  
27 and (10), Government Code, as added by this Act, not later than

1 September 30, 2011.

2 (b) The Texas Veterans Council established by Section  
3 531.752, Government Code, as added by this Act, shall convene its  
4 initial meeting not later than November 1, 2011.

5 SECTION 3. This Act does not make an appropriation. A  
6 provision in this Act that creates a new governmental program,  
7 creates a new entitlement, or imposes a new duty on a governmental  
8 entity is not mandatory during a fiscal period for which the  
9 legislature has not made a specific appropriation to implement the  
10 provision.

11 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
12 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
13 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
14 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
15 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.