

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 634
By: Farias
Corrections
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Military veterans are sometimes eligible for benefits or compensation under programs administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). In the past, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) was able to verify the veteran status of offenders through the VA, but interested parties observe that this data exchange is no longer common. When TDCJ is not aware of the veteran status of offenders, it is difficult for the agency to effectively assist inmates who are veterans in applying for benefits to which they are entitled. H.B. 634 seeks to remedy this situation by establishing a process for investigating and verifying the veteran status of offenders in the TDCJ system.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 634 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to investigate and verify the veteran status of each inmate by using data made available, through the Health and Human Services Commission, from the federal Public Assistance Reporting Information System and to use system data to assist inmates who are veterans in applying for federal benefits or compensation for which the inmates may be eligible under a program administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.