

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1199
By: Van de Putte
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Many municipalities seek to support Texas veterans and their families through local services, policies, funding, and other resources. Currently, there is no standardized measure by which to objectively judge the efficiency and effectiveness of municipalities in supporting veterans. A community's claim to be "veteran-friendly" may not be consistent with community services or policies and result in confusion for veterans and their families.

S.B. 1199 provides the authority to the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to assist in this process through the creation of a standardized rating system based on services important to veterans and their families. TVC is charged with establishing recognition tiers to allow municipalities of various sizes and levels of support to achieve different veteran-friendly designations.

Creating a standardized ratings system would also help foster healthy competition among municipalities based on their skillful handling of Texas veterans and their families. Municipalities will be encouraged to make use of positive ratings issued to them by TVC to draw pro-veteran entities into doing business within their cities. The proliferation of this system in turn will help elevate Texas's status as a veteran-friendly state.

S.B. 1199 amends the Government Code to authorize TVC to create a tiered "veteran-friendly" designation for municipalities.

As proposed, S.B. 1199 amends current law relating to development of a pilot program of the Texas Veterans Commission to designate municipalities as Veteran and Military Friendly Cities.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Veterans Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 434.022, Government Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 434, Government Code, by adding Section 434.022, as follows:

Sec. 434.022. PILOT PROGRAM TO DESIGNATE VETERAN AND MILITARY FRIENDLY CITIES. (a) Authorizes the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to develop a pilot program to designate qualifying municipalities as Veteran and Military Friendly Cities. Authorizes TVC to establish the criteria to qualify for a designation under the pilot program developed under this section.

(b) Requires the criteria established under Subsection (a) to include evaluation of a municipality's ability to provide services for veterans and members of the military, taking into consideration the availability in the municipality of:

- (1) a local or county veterans service office;
- (2) suitable housing for veterans and members of the military;

- (3) financial support for veterans and members of the military;
- (4) employment resources for veterans and members of the military;
- (5) education and training programs for veterans and members of the military;
- (6) a veterans court; and
- (7) access to health care for veterans, including mental health services and mental health services peer-to-peer networks.

(c) Authorizes TVC to accept and review applications for the designation and issue tiered designations, as appropriate.

(d) Authorizes TVC by rule to establish a procedure for discouraging and preventing the misappropriation of the phrase "Veteran and Military Friendly City."

(e) Requires TVC to report the results of the pilot program under this section to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and the committees in both houses of the legislature having jurisdiction over veterans and military issues not later than December 31, 2014.

(f) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2015.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2013.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2013.