

AN ACT

relating to the creation of a health care advocacy program for veterans.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 434.023 to read as follows:

Sec. 434.023. HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR VETERANS.

(a) In this section, "veteran" means a person who has served in:

(1) the army, navy, air force, coast guard, or marine corps of the United States; or

(2) the Texas National Guard as defined by Section 431.001.

(b) The commission by rule shall establish and implement a health care advocacy program to assist veterans in gaining access to health care facilities of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

(c) The program shall provide assistance to veterans by:

(1) resolving any access issues raised by veterans in this state or referred to the commission by the veterans toll-free hotline operated under Section 161.077, Natural Resources Code;

(2) coordinating with the Veterans Health Administration of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to support the health care advocacy program established under this section;

1           (3) coordinating with health care providers in this  
2 state to expand providers' opportunities to treat veterans through  
3 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs;

4           (4) reviewing and researching programs, projects, and  
5 initiatives designed to address the health care needs of veterans;

6           (5) evaluating the effectiveness of the efforts of the  
7 commission to improve access to health care services for veterans;

8           (6) making recommendations to the executive director  
9 of the commission to improve health care services and assistance  
10 for veterans;

11           (7) incorporating veterans' health care issues into  
12 the commission's strategic plan required under Section 2056.002;

13           (8) assisting veterans in securing benefits and  
14 services; and

15           (9) recommending legislative initiatives and policies  
16 at the local, state, and national levels to address issues  
17 affecting health care for veterans.

18           (d) The executive director of the commission shall appoint a  
19 program coordinator to administer the health care advocacy program.

20           (e) The commission shall provide facilities as appropriate  
21 to support the program to the extent funding is available for that  
22 purpose.

23           SECTION 2. As soon as practicable after the effective date  
24 of this Act but not later than January 1, 2016, the Texas Veterans  
25 Commission shall establish the health care advocacy program for  
26 veterans as required under Section 434.023, Government Code, as  
27 added by this Act, and the Texas Veterans Commission shall adopt any

1 rules necessary to implement the program.

2           SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
3 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
4 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
5 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
6 Act takes effect September 1, 2015.

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President of the Senate

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Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1762 was passed by the House on May 4, 2015, by the following vote: Yeas 140, Nays 0, 1 present, not voting.

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Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 1762 was passed by the Senate on May 22, 2015, by the following vote: Yeas 30, Nays 1.

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Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Date

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Governor