

By: Otto

H.B. No. 1762

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

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

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

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

7 Sec. 434.023. HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR VETERANS.

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

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

11 (2) the Texas National Guard as defined by Section  
12 431.001.

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

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

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

21 (2) coordinating with the Veterans Health  
22 Administration of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
23 to support the health care advocacy program established under this  
24 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.