

By: Guillen

H.B. No. 2996

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to the employment of individuals qualified for a veteran's
3 employment preference.

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

5 SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the Military Veterans'
6 Full Employment Act.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 657, Government Code, is amended to read
8 as follows:

9 CHAPTER 657. VETERAN'S EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCES

10 Sec. 657.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

11 (1) "State agency" means a board, commission, council,
12 committee, department, office, agency, or other governmental
13 entity in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of state
14 government, including an institution of higher education as defined
15 by Section 61.003, Education Code. [~~"Established service-connected~~
16 ~~disability" means a disability that has been or may be established~~
17 ~~by official records.]~~

18 (2) "Veteran" has the meaning assigned by Section
19 2308.251.

20 (3) "Veteran with a disability" means a veteran who is
21 classified as disabled by the United States Department of Veterans
22 Affairs or its successor or the branch of the service in which the
23 veteran served and whose disability is service-connected. [~~"Public~~
24 ~~entity" means a public department, commission, board, or agency.]~~

1 Sec. 657.002. INDIVIDUALS QUALIFIED FOR [~~ENTITLED TO~~]
2 VETERAN'S EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCE. The following individuals qualify
3 [~~(a) A veteran qualifies~~] for a veteran's employment preference
4 [~~if the veteran~~]:

5 (1) a veteran, including a veteran with a disability
6 [~~served in the military for not less than 90 consecutive days during~~
7 ~~a national emergency declared in accordance with federal law or was~~
8 ~~discharged from military service for an established~~
9 ~~service-connected disability~~];

10 (2) a [~~was honorably discharged from military service,~~
11 ~~and~~

12 ~~(3) is competent.~~
13 ~~(b) A~~ veteran's surviving spouse who has not remarried;

14 and
15 (3) [~~or~~] an orphan of a veteran [~~qualifies for a~~
16 ~~veteran's employment preference~~] if [~~+~~

17 ~~(1)~~ the veteran was killed while on active duty [~~+~~
18 ~~(2) the veteran served in the military for not less~~
19 ~~than 90 consecutive days during a national emergency declared in~~
20 ~~accordance with federal law; and~~
21 ~~(3) the spouse or orphan is competent~~].

22 ~~(c) In this section, "veteran" means an individual who~~
23 ~~served in the army, navy, air force, marine corps, or coast guard of~~
24 ~~the United States or in an auxiliary service of one of those~~
25 ~~branches of the armed forces.]~~

26 Sec. 657.003. VETERAN'S EMPLOYMENT PREFERENCE. (a) An
27 individual who qualifies for a veteran's employment preference is

1 entitled to a preference in employment with or appointment to a
2 state agency [~~public entity or for a public work of this state~~] over
3 other applicants for the same position who do not have a greater
4 qualification.

5 (b) A veteran with a disability [~~An individual who has an~~
6 ~~established service-connected disability and~~] is entitled to a
7 veteran's employment preference [~~is entitled to preference~~] for
8 employment or appointment [~~in a position for which a competitive~~
9 ~~examination is not held~~] over all other applicants for the same
10 position who are not veterans with a disability [~~without a~~
11 ~~service-connected disability~~] and who do not have a greater
12 qualification.

13 (c) If a state agency [~~public entity or public work of this~~
14 ~~state~~] requires a competitive examination under a merit system or
15 civil service plan for selecting or promoting employees, an
16 individual entitled to a veteran's employment preference who
17 otherwise is qualified for that position and who has received at
18 least the minimum required score for the test is entitled to have a
19 service credit of 10 points added to the test score. A veteran with
20 a disability [~~An individual who has an established~~
21 ~~service-connected disability~~] is entitled to have a service credit
22 of five additional points added to the individual's test score.

23 (d) An individual entitled to a veteran's employment
24 preference is not disqualified from holding a position with a state
25 agency [~~public entity or public work of this state~~] because of age
26 or an established service-connected disability if the age or
27 disability does not make the individual incompetent to perform the

1 duties of the position.

2 [~~(c) This chapter does not apply to:~~

3 [~~(1) the position of private secretary or deputy of an~~
4 ~~official or department; or~~

5 [~~(2) a person holding a strictly confidential relation~~
6 ~~to the appointing or employing officer.]~~

7 Sec. 657.004. VETERAN EMPLOYMENT GOAL [~~PREFERENCE~~
8 ~~REQUIRED~~] FOR STATE AGENCIES [~~PUBLIC ENTITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS~~].

9 (a) Each state agency shall establish a goal of hiring, in
10 full-time positions at the agency, a number of veterans equal to at
11 least 15 [~~An individual whose duty is to appoint or employ~~
12 ~~individuals for a public entity or public work of this state shall~~
13 ~~give preference in hiring to individuals entitled to a veteran's~~
14 ~~employment preference so that at least 40] percent of the total~~
15 number of employees of the state agency [~~public entity or public~~
16 ~~work are selected from individuals given that preference. A public~~
17 ~~entity or public work that does not have 40 percent of its employees~~
18 ~~who are entitled to the preference shall, in filling vacancies,~~
19 ~~give preferences to individuals entitled to a veteran's employment~~
20 ~~preference until it does have at least 40 percent of its employees~~
21 ~~who are entitled to the preference].~~

22 (b) A state agency may establish a veteran employment goal
23 that is greater than the percentage required under Subsection (a)
24 [~~A public entity or public work shall, when possible, give 10~~
25 ~~percent of the preferences granted under this chapter to qualified~~
26 ~~veterans discharged from the armed services of the United States~~
27 ~~within the preceding 18 months.~~

1 ~~[(c) A public entity or public work that has at least 40~~
2 ~~percent of its employees who are entitled to the preference is~~
3 ~~exempt from the requirements of Section 657.005].~~

4 Sec. 657.0045. DESIGNATION OF OPEN POSITION FOR AND
5 IMMEDIATE HIRING OF INDIVIDUAL ENTITLED TO VETERAN'S EMPLOYMENT
6 PREFERENCE. (a) A state agency may designate an open position as a
7 veteran's position and only accept applications for that position
8 from individuals who are entitled to a veteran's employment
9 preference under Section 657.003.

10 (b) Notwithstanding any other law, a state agency may hire
11 or appoint for an open position within the agency an individual
12 entitled to a veteran's employment preference under Section 657.003
13 without announcing or advertising the position if the agency:

14 (1) uses the automated labor exchange system
15 administered by the Texas Workforce Commission to identify an
16 individual who qualifies for a veteran's employment preference
17 under this chapter; and

18 (2) determines the individual meets the
19 qualifications required for the position.

20 Sec. 657.0046. STATE AGENCY VETERAN'S LIAISON. (a) Each
21 state agency that has at least 500 full-time equivalent positions
22 shall designate an individual from the agency to serve as a
23 veteran's liaison.

24 (b) A state agency that has fewer than 500 full-time
25 equivalent positions may designate an individual from the agency to
26 serve as a veteran's liaison.

27 (c) Each state agency that designates a veteran's liaison

1 shall make available on the agency's Internet website the liaison's
2 individual work contact information.

3 Sec. 657.0047. INTERVIEWS AT STATE AGENCIES. For each
4 announced open position at a state agency, the state agency shall
5 interview the greater of:

6 (1) one individual qualified for a veteran's
7 employment preference under Section 657.003; or

8 (2) a number of individuals qualified for a veteran's
9 employment preference under Section 657.003 equal to 20 percent of
10 the total number of individuals interviewed for the position.

11 Sec. 657.005. EMPLOYMENT INVESTIGATION. (a) The
12 individual whose duty is to appoint or employ an applicant for a
13 position with a [~~public entity or public work of this~~] state agency
14 or an officer or the chief administrator of the agency [~~entity or~~
15 ~~work~~] who receives an application for appointment or employment by
16 an individual entitled to a veteran's employment preference, before
17 appointing or employing any individual, shall investigate the
18 qualifications of the applicant for the position. [~~If the~~
19 ~~applicant is of good moral character and can perform the duties of~~
20 ~~the position, the officer, chief executive, or individual whose~~
21 ~~duty is to appoint or employ shall appoint or employ the applicant~~
22 ~~for the position.~~]

23 (b) An applicant who is a veteran with a [~~an established~~
24 ~~service-connected~~] disability shall furnish the official records
25 to the individual whose duty is to fill the position.

26 Sec. 657.006. FEDERAL LAW AND GRANTS. To the extent that
27 this chapter conflicts with federal law or a limitation provided by

1 a federal grant to a state agency [~~public entity~~], this chapter
2 shall be construed to operate in harmony with the federal law or
3 limitation of the federal grant.

4 Sec. 657.007. PREFERENCE APPLICABLE TO REDUCTION IN
5 WORKFORCE. (a) An individual entitled to a hiring or appointment
6 preference under this chapter is also entitled to a preference in
7 retaining employment if the state agency [~~public entity~~] that
8 employs or appoints the individual reduces its workforce.

9 (b) The preference granted under this section applies only
10 to the extent that a reduction in workforce by an employing state
11 agency [~~public entity~~] involves other employees of a similar type
12 or classification.

13 Sec. 657.008. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. (a) A state agency
14 [~~public entity~~] shall file quarterly with the comptroller a report
15 that states:

16 (1) the percentage of the total number of employees
17 hired or appointed by the agency [~~entity~~] during the reporting
18 period who are persons entitled to a preference under this chapter;

19 (2) the percentage of the total number of the agency's
20 [~~entity's~~] employees who are persons entitled to a preference under
21 this chapter; and

22 (3) the number of complaints filed with the executive
23 director [~~governing body~~] of the agency [~~entity~~] under Section
24 [657.010](#) during that quarter and the number of those complaints
25 resolved by the executive director [~~governing body~~].

26 (b) The comptroller shall make each quarterly report filed
27 under Subsection (a) available to the public on the comptroller's

1 Internet website.

2 (c) Not later than December 1 of each year, the [The]
3 comptroller shall file [~~annually~~] with the legislature a report
4 that compiles and analyzes information that the comptroller
5 receives from state agencies [~~public entities~~] under Subsection
6 (a).

7 Sec. 657.009. STATE AGENCIES [~~PUBLIC ENTITIES~~] TO LIST
8 POSITIONS WITH TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION. (a) A state agency
9 [~~public entity~~] shall provide to the Texas Workforce Commission,
10 under rules adopted under this section by the commission,
11 information regarding an open position that is subject to the
12 hiring or appointment preference required by this chapter.

13 (b) The Texas Workforce Commission shall make available to
14 the public the information provided by a state agency [~~public~~
15 ~~entity~~] under Subsection (a).

16 (c) To promote the purposes of this chapter, the Texas
17 Workforce Commission shall adopt rules under this section that
18 facilitate the exchange of employment information between state
19 agencies [~~public entities~~] and individuals entitled to a preference
20 under this chapter.

21 (d) The Texas Workforce Commission shall adopt forms and
22 procedures necessary to administer this section.

23 Sec. 657.010. COMPLAINT REGARDING EMPLOYMENT DECISION OF
24 STATE AGENCY [~~PUBLIC ENTITY OR PUBLIC WORK~~]. (a) An individual
25 entitled to a veteran's employment preference under this chapter
26 who is aggrieved by a decision of a state agency [~~public entity or~~
27 ~~public work of this state~~] to which this chapter applies relating to

1 hiring or appointing the individual, or relating to retaining the
2 individual if the state agency [~~entity or work~~] reduces its
3 workforce, may appeal the decision by filing a written complaint
4 with the executive director [~~governing body~~] of the state agency
5 [~~public entity or public work~~] under this section.

6 (b) The executive director [~~governing body~~] of a state
7 agency [~~public entity or public work~~] that receives a written
8 complaint under Subsection (a) shall respond to the complaint not
9 later than the 15th business day after the date the executive
10 director [~~governing body~~] receives the complaint. The executive
11 director [~~governing body~~] may render a different hiring or
12 appointment decision than the decision that is the subject of the
13 complaint if the executive director [~~governing body~~] determines
14 that the veteran's preference was not applied.

15 SECTION 3. The changes in law made by this Act to Chapter
16 657, Government Code, apply only to an open position with a state
17 agency for which the state agency begins accepting applications on
18 or after the effective date of this Act. An open position with a
19 state agency for which the state agency begins accepting
20 applications before the effective date of this Act is governed by
21 the law in effect on the date the state agency began accepting
22 applications, and the former law is continued in effect for that
23 purpose.

24 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2015.