

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
85R751 MTB-D

S.B. 544  
By: Lucio  
Veteran Affairs & Border Security  
4/3/2017  
As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Currently, Chapter 434, Government Code, requires every county with a population of 200,000 or more to maintain a veterans county service office and to appoint a veterans county service officer (VCSO). VCSOs are statutorily required to "aid any county resident who served in the armed forces or nurses corps of the United States, and any orphan or dependent of the person, to prepare, submit, and present any claim against the United States or a state for benefits to which the person may be entitled under United States or state law." In the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations (VAMI) Interim Report to the 85th Legislature, VAMI reported that VCSOs "provide invaluable support in all areas of life in addition to their role in claims assistance to veterans and their families."

State statute requires that the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) provide training to VCSOs. In addition to this TVC training, VCSOs also receive training and certification from other accredited agencies. During the interim, VAMI heard testimony from the VCSO Association of Texas on their training requirements; the association requested a change to the current statutory language to allow VCSOs who receive training through outside organizations to count towards the mandatory state training. S.B. 544 addresses this concern by updating state statute.

As proposed, S.B. 544 amends current law relating to required training for veterans county service officers and assistant veterans county service officers.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 434.038, Government Code, by amending Subsections (a), (a-1), (c), and (e) and adding Subsection (a-2), as follows:

(a) Requires a veterans county service officer (VCSO), within the time after the date of the VCSO's appointment that the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) prescribes, to complete a course of initial training, rather than to complete a course of initial training provided by TVC.

(a-1) Authorizes the required initial and continuing training to be provided by TVC or a public or private entity approved by TVC under Subsection (e).

(a-2) Redesignates text of existing Subsection (a-1) as Subsection (a-2) and makes no further changes to this subsection.

(c) Requires the commissioners court of an officer's county to reimburse a VCSO's travel and lodging expenses incurred in attending training required under this section (Training and Certification), rather than expenses incurred in attending TVC training, unless state funds are appropriated for that purpose.

(e) Requires TVC, among certain other tasks, to approve the public or private entities to provide the required initial and continuing training. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2017.