

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
86R2197 SMT-D

H.B. 696  
By: Blanco et al. (Powell)  
Veteran Affairs & Border Security  
5/11/2019  
Engrossed

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

By providing veteran service men and women with greater access to services and programs aimed at assisting them transition from military to civilian life, H.B. 696 seeks to reduce Texas' veteran underemployment rate and raise the standard quality of life to those brave individuals to whom we owe much.

H.B. 696 would codify into statute two programs currently operated by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):

- The Operation Welcome Home program, first established in 2016 as part of Governor Abbott's tri-force, currently utilizes enhanced employment services such as career technical training and education programs to allow for greater opportunities for veteran osmosis into the employment world would be codified into statute.
- First created in 2008, the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP) employs veterans to perform tasks such as seeking out veterans in need of assistance and referring those veterans to service providers related to education, employment and/or medical care.

H.B. 696 requires TVLP to employ veterans as resource and referral specialists. Specialists reach out to veterans in need, coordinate with other agencies, and serve as referrals.

The bill would also authorize TWC to award grants to state, local, or private entities that aim to help veterans assimilate into civilian life by preparing for a job or getting an education.

H.B. 696 amends current law relating to employment and referral services for veterans and military service members.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 302.0033, Labor Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, by adding Sections 302.0033 and 302.00335, as follows:

Sec. 302.0033. OPERATION WELCOME HOME PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to establish and administer the Operation Welcome Home program (program) to expedite the entry of veterans and military service members into the workforce through the use of enhanced employment services. Requires TWC, in establishing the program, to build partnerships between military transition centers and local workforce development boards to ensure the availability of employment services, including services related to education, career technical training, and entrepreneurship.

(b) Authorizes TWC to award grants to state, local, or private entities that perform activities related to the purposes of this section.

(c) Requires TWC to administer the program using money previously appropriated to TWC or received from federal or other sources.

(d) Authorizes TWC to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

Sec. 302.00335. TEXAS VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM. (a) Requires TWC, in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), to establish a Texas Veterans Leadership Program.

(b) Provides that the mission of the program is to serve as a resource and referral network connecting veterans with the resources and tools they need to lead productive lives and enjoy the full benefits of the society they have willingly served.

(c) Requires the program to collaborate with local workforce development boards to provide services to veterans under this section. Authorizes the program to collaborate with other federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies to provide services to veterans under this section.

(d) Requires the program to employ veterans to serve as veteran resource and referral specialists. Requires a veteran resource and referral specialist to:

(1) seek out veterans in need of services;

(2) serve as a resource and referral agent, directing veterans to resources tailored to veterans' needs;

(3) make referrals and coordinate with other programs of TWC, TVC, and other federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies that provide services for veterans relating to employment; education and training, medical care, mental health and counseling, and veterans benefits; and

(4) coordinate the services of volunteer veterans familiar with the obstacles faced by veterans to assist in mentoring and serving veterans.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.