

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 696
By: Blanco
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been reported that many veterans have a difficult time making the transition back to civilian life and that some have identified finding a job as the top challenge of this kind. Two programs developed through a partnership between the Veterans Commission and the Workforce Solutions network of the Texas Workforce Commission have been praised for connecting veterans with helpful resources, particularly employment-related programs and accessible education and training. H.B. 696 seeks to build on these positive developments by codifying the operation welcome home program and the Texas veterans leadership program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 696 amends the Labor Code to require the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to establish and administer the operation welcome home program to expedite the entry of veterans and military service members into the workforce through the use of enhanced employment services. The bill requires the TWC, in establishing the program, to build partnerships between military transition centers and local workforce development boards to ensure the availability of employment services. The bill authorizes the TWC to award grants to state, local, or private entities that perform activities related to the purposes of the program. The bill requires the TWC to administer the program using money previously appropriated to the TWC or received from federal or other sources and authorizes the TWC to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of the program.

H.B. 696 requires the TWC, in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission, to establish a Texas veterans leadership program and establishes the mission of the leadership program 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. The bill requires the leadership program to collaborate with local workforce development boards, and authorizes the leadership program to collaborate with other federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies, to provide to veterans the services prescribed by the bill. The bill requires the leadership program to employ veterans to serve as veteran resource and referral specialists and sets out the duties of such a specialist.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.