

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3311  
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

There are concerns that the process to investigate and verify the veteran status of a person incarcerated in a jail may not be conducted in a timely manner and that the postage costs for mailing the paperwork needed to apply for federal U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits or compensation may be prohibitive for some veterans. C.S.H.B. 3311 seeks to address these concerns by requiring a county sheriff to verify the veteran status of each prisoner during the intake process and requiring the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and each county sheriff to provide inmates and prisoners with certain assistance in applying for veterans benefits.

### **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 this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3311 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, in assisting inmates who are veterans to apply for federal benefits or compensation for which the inmates may be eligible under a program administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to mail any related paperwork, application, or other correspondence on behalf of and at no charge to the inmate. The bill requires the Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS) to require each county sheriff to provide a prisoner, on verification of the prisoner's veteran status, with a prepaid postcard that is supplied by the Texas Veterans Commission for purposes of requesting assistance in applying for veterans benefits. The bill specifies that the requirement for TCJS to require the county sheriff to investigate and verify the veteran status of each prisoner by using certain data applies during the intake process.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2019.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 3311 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute does not include a requirement for a county sheriff to mail any related paperwork,

application, or other correspondence on behalf of and at no charge to an inmate who is a veteran applying for federal benefits or compensation, but the substitute includes a requirement for a county sheriff to provide a prisoner, on verification of the prisoner's veteran status, with a prepaid postcard that is supplied by the Texas Veterans Commission for purposes of requesting assistance in applying for veterans benefits.