

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3359
By: Miller
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised regarding the difficulty many veterans face in readjusting to civilian life on their return from combat or active duty. It has been noted that many of these returning veterans face various legal issues such as foreclosures, debt collection, child custody disputes, or divorce, and that many may struggle to afford legal assistance, further complicating their situation and rendering them few alternatives. C.S.H.B. 3359 seeks to address this issue and provide for increased access to pro bono legal services for veterans, active duty members of the U.S. armed forces, and members of the state military forces.

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. 3359 amends the Government Code to include making grants to provide pro bono legal services to veterans, active duty members of the U.S. armed forces, and members of the state military forces among the approved uses of money from the fund for veterans' assistance that is appropriated to the Texas Veterans Commission. The bill authorizes the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services to establish, by majority vote, a coordinating workgroup to focus on pro bono legal services for veterans, including opportunities and obstacles for providing those services.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3359 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 provisions exempting a member of the state bar who is in good standing from the requirement to pay an annual membership fee if the member provided qualifying pro bono legal services to veterans in the preceding year and requiring the Texas Supreme Court to adopt rules relating to that exemption.

The substitute includes a provision authorizing the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services to establish a coordinating workgroup to focus on pro bono legal services for veterans.