

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 607
By: Watson
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas voters established the Veterans' Land Board (VLB) through a constitutional amendment in 1946 to honor Texas veterans and their families. The VLB carries out its mission by providing benefits and services for qualified Texas veterans, military members, and their families, including low-interest loans and long-term skilled nursing home care. Subject to review, but not abolishment, under the Texas Sunset Act, C.S.S.B. 607 seeks to provide for the continued review of the VLB and the implementation of certain best practices recommendations of the Sunset Advisory Commission and to extend eligibility for land loans to certain Texas State Guard members.

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.S.B. 607 amends the Natural Resources Code to change the period during which the Veterans' Land Board (VLB) is subject to review under the Texas Sunset Act from the period in which state agencies abolished in 2019 and every 12th year after 2019 are reviewed to the period in which state agencies abolished in 2031 are reviewed and every 12th year after that. The bill requires the VLB to develop and implement policies that clearly separate the policy-making responsibilities of the VLB and the management responsibilities of the executive secretary, assistant executive secretary, and staff of the VLB.

C.S.S.B. 607 revises the information that must be provided in the VLB member training program and adds as information that must be provided information regarding the scope of and limitations on the VLB's rulemaking authority and information regarding the requirements of other laws applicable to members of a state policy-making body in performing their duties. The bill requires the commissioner of the General Land Office to create a training manual that includes the required training information, requires the commissioner to distribute a copy of the manual annually to each VLB member, and requires each member to sign and submit a statement to the commissioner acknowledging that the member has received and reviewed the manual. These provisions apply to a VLB member appointed before, on, or after the bill's effective date. A VLB member who, before that effective date, completed the required training program as it existed before that date is required to complete additional training only on subjects added by the bill, and that member may not vote, deliberate, or count as a member in attendance at a VLB meeting held on or after December 1, 2019, until the member completes the additional training.

C.S.S.B. 607 includes among the persons who qualify for a land loan provided by the VLB a member of the Texas State Guard who, at the time the person applies for the loan, has completed at least 10 years of service as a member of the Texas State Guard and is not considered to have been dishonorably discharged from the Texas State Guard.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 607 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes provisions making certain members of the Texas State Guard eligible to receive a land loan.