86R10744 YDB-F

By:  Zaffirini S.B. No. 2047

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to pro bono legal services for veterans and service members and an exemption from the state bar membership fee for attorneys providing those services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 81.054, Government Code, is amended by adding Subsection (b-1) to read as follows:

(b-1)  A member of the state bar who is in good standing is not required to pay an annual membership fee if in the preceding year the member provided the required number of qualifying pro bono legal services to veterans in accordance with rules adopted by the supreme court under this chapter. The rules must include standards governing this membership fee exemption, including:

(1)  the number of pro bono hours required for the exemption;

(2)  the types of pro bono legal services that qualify for the exemption; and

(3)  the pro bono legal services programs through which the hours may qualify for the exemption.

SECTION 2.  Section 434.017(c), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  Money in the fund may only be appropriated to the Texas Veterans Commission. Money appropriated under this subsection shall be used to:

(1)  make grants to address veterans' needs;

(2)  make grants to provide pro bono legal services to veterans, active duty members of the United States armed forces, and members of the state military forces;

(3)  administer the fund; and

(4) [~~(3)~~]  analyze and investigate data received from the federal Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) that is administered by the Administration for Children and Families of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

SECTION 3.  Section 434.0171, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 434.0171.  STATE EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUND FOR VETERANS' ASSISTANCE. For purposes of Subchapter I, Chapter 659:

(1)  the Texas Veterans Commission, for the sole purpose of managing the fund for veterans' assistance, is considered an eligible charitable organization entitled to participate in the state employee charitable campaign; and

(2)  a state employee is entitled to authorize a deduction for contributions to the Texas Veterans Commission for the purposes of managing the fund for veterans' assistance as a charitable contribution under Section 659.132, and the Texas Veterans Commission may use the contributions for the purposes listed in Section 434.017(c)[~~, as redesignated and amended by Chapter 1418 (H.B. 3107), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007~~].

SECTION 4.  (a) As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Supreme Court shall adopt the rules necessary to implement Section 81.054(b-1), Government Code, as added by this Act.

(b)  Section 81.054(b-1), Government Code, as added by this Act, applies to a fee for membership or renewal of membership in the State Bar of Texas that is due on or after January 1, 2020. A fee for membership or renewal of membership that is due before that date is governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 5.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.