

By: Hinojosa

S.B. No. 131

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of an open burn pit registry for certain service members and veterans.

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as the Service Member and Veteran Open Burn Pit Registry Act.

SECTION 2. Subtitle D, Title 2, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Chapter 99 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 99. OPEN BURN PIT REGISTRY

Sec. 99.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Airborne hazard" means an airborne environmental contaminant, including open burn pit smoke, oil well fire smoke, sand, dust, or other particles, that may cause short-term or long-term health effects to a person exposed to the contaminant.

(2) "Open burn pit," also known as an "open air burn pit," means a site used for solid waste disposal by burning the waste in the outdoor air without the use of a commercially manufactured incinerator or other equipment specifically designed and manufactured for burning solid waste.

(3) "Service member" means an individual who is currently serving in:

(A) the armed forces of the United States;

(B) an auxiliary service of one of the armed forces of the United States, including the National Guard; or

1 (C) the state military forces as defined by
2 Section 431.001, Government Code.

3 (4) "Veteran" means an individual who served in:

4 (A) the armed forces of the United States;

5 (B) an auxiliary service of one of the armed
6 forces of the United States, including the National Guard; or

7 (C) the state military forces as defined by
8 Section 431.001, Government Code.

9 Sec. 99.002. RULES; MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. The
10 executive commissioner shall adopt the rules necessary to
11 administer this chapter and may enter into a memorandum of
12 understanding with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs
13 as necessary to administer this chapter.

14 Sec. 99.003. OPEN BURN PIT REGISTRY. (a) For outreach,
15 education, and advocacy related to exposure to open burn pit smoke
16 or other airborne hazards by service members and veterans in this
17 state, the department shall create and maintain an open burn pit
18 registry of service members and veterans who were exposed to open
19 burn pit smoke or other airborne hazards during their military
20 service in:

21 (1) the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or
22 after August 2, 1990;

23 (2) Operation Desert Shield or Desert Storm;

24 (3) Djibouti, Africa, on or after September 11, 2001;

25 (4) Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, or New
26 Dawn; or

27 (5) any other conflict or theater identified by the

1 United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

2 (b) The department shall include for each entry in the open
3 burn pit registry:

4 (1) the service member's or veteran's name, address,
5 phone number, and electronic address;

6 (2) the location of the service member's or veteran's
7 service and the period of service;

8 (3) any medical condition or death of the service
9 member or veteran that may be related to exposure to open burn pit
10 smoke or other airborne hazards; and

11 (4) any other information that the department or the
12 United States Department of Veterans Affairs considers necessary.

13 (c) The department shall:

14 (1) share the information included in the department's
15 open burn pit registry with the United States Department of
16 Veterans Affairs Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry; and

17 (2) electronically link the open burn pit registry
18 created under this chapter with the federal registry.

19 Sec. 99.004. VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION. A service member or
20 veteran described by Section 99.003, or a family member of that
21 service member or veteran, may voluntarily register a case of
22 exposure to open burn pit smoke or other airborne hazards with the
23 department for inclusion in the registry.

24 Sec. 99.005. CONFIDENTIALITY. Entries and information
25 obtained under this chapter are confidential and are not subject to
26 disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, are not subject to
27 subpoena, and may not otherwise be released or made public except as

1 provided by this section or Section 99.003.

2 Sec. 99.006. OPEN BURN PIT INFORMATION. The department,
3 with the assistance of the Texas Veterans Commission, shall develop
4 and include on its Internet website information to inform service
5 members, veterans, and their families about the:

6 (1) registration and use of the department's open burn
7 pit registry and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs
8 Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry;

9 (2) most recent scientific developments on the health
10 effects of exposure to open burn pit smoke and other airborne
11 hazards and the status of any illness or condition that is presumed
12 to be caused by exposure to open burn pit smoke or other airborne
13 hazards as designated by the United States Department of Veterans
14 Affairs;

15 (3) availability of any treatment offered by the
16 United States Department of Veterans Affairs for an illness or
17 condition that may be caused by exposure to open burn pit smoke or
18 other airborne hazards;

19 (4) process for applying to the United States
20 Department of Veterans Affairs for service-related disability
21 compensation for an illness or condition that may be related to
22 exposure to open burn pit smoke or other airborne hazards,
23 including the methods for documenting the illness or condition; and

24 (5) manner of appealing to the United States
25 Department of Veterans Affairs an existing service-related
26 disability rating decision or requesting an increased
27 service-related disability rating based on an illness or condition

1 that may be related to exposure to open burn pit smoke or other
2 airborne hazards.

3 Sec. 99.007. REPORT. Not later than December 1 of each
4 even-numbered year following the creation of the registry, the
5 department shall submit a report to the appropriate standing
6 committees of the house of representatives and senate that
7 includes:

8 (1) an assessment of the effectiveness of collection
9 and maintenance of information on the health effects of exposure to
10 open burn pit smoke and other airborne hazards; and

11 (2) any recommendation to improve the collection and
12 maintenance of information about the health effects of exposure to
13 open burn pit smoke and other airborne hazards.

14 SECTION 3. (a) Not later than March 1, 2020, the executive
15 commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission shall
16 adopt the rules and enter into any memorandum of understanding
17 necessary to administer this Act.

18 (b) Notwithstanding Section 99.007, Health and Safety Code,
19 as added by this Act, the Department of State Health Services shall
20 submit an initial report under that section not later than December
21 1, 2020.

22 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.