

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 562
By: Raymond
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The mission of the Veterans' Land Board (VLB) is to provide the best package of veterans benefits in the United States, which includes providing low-interest loans to purchase land or homes, low-interest loans for home repairs and eligible improvements, and the management and operation of veterans' cemeteries and nursing homes located throughout Texas. However, under current law, certain sensitive information relating to veterans, active military service members, and their family members that is maintained, created, or received by the VLB is at risk of public disclosure. H.B. 562 seeks to address this issue by establishing the confidentiality of certain information relating to veterans and active military service members while providing for the authorized disclosure of the information by the VLB under limited circumstances.

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

H.B. 562 amends the Natural Resources Code to establish that the following information received or maintained by the Veterans' Land Board (VLB) that relates to a veteran or veteran's family member who applies for or receives benefits or services offered by the VLB or to a current member of the U.S. armed forces or Texas military forces is confidential and not subject to disclosure under state public information law:

- name;
- home address;
- telephone number;
- email address;
- emergency contact information;
- social security number; or
- any other information that reveals whether the person has family members.

H.B. 562 sets out the limited circumstances under which the VLB may disclose this information to certain governmental entities, private vendors, and certain persons with written consent, but establishes that the disclosed information is not subject to disclosure under state public information law and that the disclosure does not constitute a voluntary disclosure to the public by the VLB under that law. To the extent of any conflict with state public information law relating to the confidentiality of certain email addresses, the bill's provisions prevail.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.