

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 671
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Suicide rates, both nationally and in Texas, are disproportionately high among military veterans. According to data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in 2020 veteran suicide deaths averaged 1.4 per day in Texas. Further, veterans commit suicide by firearm at significantly higher rates than the general population. In 2020, according to the VA, 75 percent of Texas veteran suicide deaths involved firearms. Texan veterans and their family members would benefit from accessible suicide prevention education, particularly from a source veterans trust. H.B. 671 seeks to address this issue by requiring the Texas Veterans Commission to conduct a suicide prevention campaign to provide veterans with information regarding suicide prevention and providing for the establishment of a dedicated website to provide information about safely storing firearms.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Veterans Commission in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 671 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to conduct a suicide prevention campaign to provide veterans with information regarding suicide prevention. With respect to conducting the campaign, the bill sets out the following:

- a requirement for TVC to establish a dedicated website to provide information about safely storing firearms;
- a requirement that TVC collaborate with, and an authorization for TVC to contract with, community-based, nonprofit, or private organizations; and
- an authorization for TVC to solicit and accept gifts and grants.

H.B. 671 requires TVC, not later than March 1, 2024, to establish the campaign and adopt rules necessary to implement the campaign.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.