

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2248
By: Garcia
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In the spring of 2020, Vanessa Guillén, a U.S. Army Specialist stationed in Fort Hood, Texas, was murdered at the age of 20. Prior to her death, Vanessa Guillén had submitted multiple reports of sexual harassment by the man who killed her. In 2021, the Department of Defense received close to 9,000 reports of sexual assault, and women at Fort Hood and Fort Bliss face significantly above-average rates of assault. These figures likely obscure the full scope of the problem, as instances of harassment and assault may go unreported due to a fear of retaliation.

The tragic murder of Vanessa Guillén continues to highlight the need for awareness around and actions to prevent sexual harassment and assault in the military. H.B. 2248 seeks to address these issues by creating a state holiday to honor the life of Vanessa Guillén and to increase awareness of and accountability for military sexual assault and the military's response to missing service 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

H.B. 2248 amends the Government Code to designate September 30 as Vanessa Guillén Day in memory of the life and tragic death of Vanessa Guillén and to increase awareness of and the military's response to missing persons, sexual assault, and sexual harassment cases for service members. The bill requires the day to be regularly observed by appropriate programs and activities.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.