

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 252
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Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In recent years, law enforcement agencies and political subdivisions have been facing shortages of police officers, jailers, and telecommunicators. The demand for police officers and jailers is high, but the number of people choosing to join these professions is declining. U.S. military veterans are a natural choice to help staff these positions as there are many veterans in Texas who are currently unemployed or otherwise lack quality employment. Veterans require additional avenues for gainful employment, especially considering many do not have college degrees. Veterans are trained to work well in a unit, have excellent communication skills, and can operate under stress, which makes them a natural fit for these positions. S.B. 252 seeks to allow for a greater number of military veterans to be hired as law enforcement officers in Texas by authorizing legal permanent residents who have been honorably discharged from the U.S. armed forces after at least two years of service to be hired to hold any position that requires a license issued by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

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

S.B. 252 amends the Local Government Code to authorize a political subdivision that appoints or employs a person to hold a position that requires the person to be licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) to appoint or employ to hold that position a legal permanent U.S. resident who is an honorably discharged U.S. armed forces veteran with at least two years of service before discharge and who holds the appropriate license issued by TCOLE. The bill prohibits a political subdivision from appointing or employing a person to hold a supervisory position until the person becomes a U.S. citizen.

S.B. 252 amends the Occupations Code to require TCOLE to issue a license to such a person if they meet the applicable requirements for the license under state law and TCOLE rules and present evidence satisfactory to TCOLE that they have applied for U.S. citizenship. The bill revises the preemployment procedures for law enforcement agencies to require an agency seeking to hire an honorably discharged U.S. armed forces veteran with at least two years of service before discharge as a law enforcement officer to submit to TCOLE before hiring the individual confirmation that the hiring agency, to the best of its ability, obtained and reviewed proof of legal permanent residence and proof that the person has applied for U.S. citizenship. These provisions apply only to the hiring of a person by a law enforcement agency that occurs on or after December 1, 2023. The hiring of a person by a law enforcement agency that occurs

before that date is governed by the law in effect immediately before the bill's effective date, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

S.B. 252 requires TCOLE, not later than December 1, 2023, to amend rules as necessary to comply with the bill's Occupation Code provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.