

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
88R7520 MP-D

S.B. 777  
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Veteran Affairs  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Texas currently provides free or discounted access to state parks to certain populations, such as residents 65 years or older, elderly born before September 1, 1930, and individuals with substantial physical or mental impairment. The National Park Association grants free access to national parks for active duty armed forces members, veterans, and Gold Star families.

S.B. 777 amends the Parks and Wildlife Code to allow active duty armed forces members, veterans, and Gold Star families to access Texas state parks free of charge, which mirrors the National Park program.

As proposed, S.B. 777 amends current law relating to the issuance of state parklands passports to and a waiver of certain state park fees for veterans, active duty armed forces members, and certain family members of a person who died while serving in the United States armed forces.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 13.018, Parks and Wildlife Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 13.018, Parks and Wildlife Code, by amending Subsections (a), (c), and (e) and adding Subsection (f), as follows:

(a) Authorizes the following people to apply to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) for a state parklands passport:

- (1) a resident of this state who is 65 years old or over who has resided in the state for six consecutive months preceding the date of application for a parklands passport or any other individual in a category that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission (TPWC) by rule designates as a resident of this state who is 65 years old or over;
- (2) a veteran of the armed services of the United States;
- (3) a member of the United States armed services on active duty;
- (4) a surviving spouse, parent, child, or sibling of a person who died while serving in the United States armed forces; and
- (5) makes a nonsubstantive change to this subdivision.

Deletes existing text authorizing a member of the United States armed forces on active duty who is 65 years old or over and text authorizing a veteran of the armed services of the United States who, as a result of military service, has a service-connected disability, as defined by the Veterans' Administration, consisting of the loss of the use of a lower extremity or of a 60 percent disability rating and who is receiving compensation from the

United States because of the disability to apply to TPWD for a state parklands passport. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(c) Makes conforming changes to this subsection.

(e) Provides that a state parklands passport issued to a person described by Subsection (a)(3) is valid for one year from the date of issuance and is authorized to be renewed in the manner prescribed by TPWC rule.

(f) Requires TPWC by rule to establish eligibility requirements and privileges available to the holder of a state parklands passport described by Subsection (a)(5), rather than Subsection (a)(3).

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2023.