

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1859
By: Hancock
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Statutory language regarding veteran assistance agencies is in need of updates. S.B. 1859 seeks to address this issue by revising statutory provisions to accurately reflect current practice and remove antiquated provisions and references.

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. 1859 amends the Government Code to remove the following as information that the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) is required to evaluate and track in order to evaluate and improve the administration of claims assistance services for veterans:

- the quality of claims submitted to the state strike force team;
- the percentage of claims developed through claims assistance services that are processed as fully developed claims by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and
- the success rate of claims and appeals developed through claims assistance service.

The bill removes the specification that such information be tracked and evaluated by claims district, and repeals the requirement for TVC, in documenting the success rate of claims and appeals, to include in a consolidated report each claim, the corresponding VA decision, and the status and outcome of any appeal.

S.B. 1859 removes the option for a performance incentive to an individual or an entity for providing services to veterans to be monetary or nonmonetary, and specifies that such an award is a monetary award.

S.B. 1859 revises procedures regarding the state veterans benefits booklet created by TVC as follows:

- removes the requirement for TVC to create both a printable and electronic version of the booklet and to provide both versions to specified recipients;
- removes requirements regarding the distribution and availability of the printed booklet;
- requires TVC instead to create an electronic booklet; and
- provides for the availability and accessibility of the electronic booklet.

S.B. 1859 repeals provisions that establish the following:

- the "TAPS" tuition voucher program, which provided for the issuance of \$25 tuition and fee exemption vouchers for institutions of higher education to students in grades 6 through 12 or at postsecondary educational institutions who sound "Taps" on a bugle, trumpet, or cornet during military honors funerals held in Texas for deceased veterans; and
- the authorization for TVC to accept donated computers from any person, including a governmental entity, and cooperate with that person to establish a program to provide computers at no cost to interested veterans county service officers.

S.B. 1859 repeals the following provisions:

- Section 54.344, Education Code;
- Section 434.0072, Government Code;
- Section 434.0078(f), Government Code; and
- Section 434.106, Government Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.