

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas**

FISCAL NOTE, 88TH LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

March 29, 2023

TO: Honorable Trent Ashby, Chair, House Committee on Culture, Recreation & Tourism

FROM: Jerry McGinty, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: HB1740 by Leach (Relating to waivers for entrance fees to state parks for resident first responders, military service members, and veterans.), **As Introduced**

Estimated Two-year Net Impact to General Revenue Related Funds for HB1740, As Introduced : an impact of \$0 through the biennium ending August 31, 2025.

The bill would have an estimated two-year impact to General Revenue-Dedicated Funds of (\$5,045,400) through the biennium ending August 31, 2025.

The bill would make no appropriation but could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement the provisions of the bill.

General Revenue-Related Funds, Five- Year Impact:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	Probable Net Positive/(Negative) Impact to General Revenue Related Funds
2024	\$0
2025	\$0
2026	\$0
2027	\$0
2028	\$0

All Funds, Five-Year Impact:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	Probable Revenue (Loss) from State Parks Acct 64
2024	(\$2,522,700)
2025	(\$2,522,700)
2026	(\$2,522,700)
2027	(\$2,522,700)
2028	(\$2,522,700)

Fiscal Analysis

The bill would amend the Parks and Wildlife Code to require the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to waive entrance fees to state parks for Texas residents who are first responders, active-duty members of military services, and veterans. The bill would define first responders as including firefighters, emergency medical service personnel, and law enforcement officers.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

Methodology

According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the average state park entrance fee is \$5 for those younger than 65 years of age ("non-senior") and \$2.50 for those 65 years of age and older ("senior"). The cost for a Texas State Parks Pass, which grants unlimited free entry to state parks and other benefits for one year, is \$70. State Park entrance fee and Parks Pass revenue is deposited to the credit of General Revenue-Dedicated State Parks Account No. 64 (GR-D 64).

Based on data provided by TPWD, 9,666,854 visits to state parks took place in fiscal year 2022 and 175,140 State Park Passes were purchased. This amounts to approximately 0.32 visits per person for the Texas population and 0.7 percent of the population purchasing a State Parks Pass based on the most recent U.S. Census data. TPWD assumes that the population of first responders, active-duty members of military services, and veterans had a similar state park visitation rate and State Parks Pass ownership to the general public in fiscal year 2022.

Based on the information provided by TPWD, this analysis assumes the total revenue loss from 509,555 individuals (61,351 first responders and 448,204 active duty military and veterans who seek the waiver established by the bill) would be \$2,522,700 per year.

According to the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, the Department of State Health Services, and the Commission on Law Enforcement, there are 118,691 first responders in Texas. Based upon the assumed visitation and State Park Pass ownership rates, TPWD estimates that approximately 60,691 first responders visit state parks each year and 1,320 currently hold a Park Pass. Waiving the entrance fees for these individuals would result in an anticipated revenue loss to GR-D 64 of \$303,455 each year. Assuming half of first responders who previously purchased a State Parks Pass would opt instead for this waiver, TPWD anticipates a revenue loss to GR-D 64 of \$46,200 per year.

Based on numbers maintained by the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and State and National Guard, there are 1,527,155 active duty and veteran military in Texas. Based upon the assumed visitation and State Park Pass ownership rates as well as participation in the Parklands Passport program, TPWD estimates that 238,505 non-senior veterans and 166,146 senior veterans who previously were paying entrance fees would be impacted by the bill's waivers. TPWD assumes all of this veteran population would seek the waiver and anticipates a revenue loss to GR-D 64 of \$1,607,890 each fiscal year. The agency assumes that of the estimated number of veterans who purchase State Park Passes, or 9,859 individuals, half would opt for the Passport which would result in an anticipated revenue loss to GR-D 64 of \$345,065 each fiscal year.

Based on the information outlined above, TPWD estimates that 38,208 visits by active duty military members each year and that 831 purchase Texas State Parks Passes. Assuming all non-Parks Pass holders and half of Parks Pass holders seek fee waivers established by the bill, the anticipated revenue loss to GR-D 64 would be \$220,090 each fiscal year.

The revenue loss analysis provided by the Comptroller of Public Accounts aligns with TPWD's estimate.

Amounts reflected in the table are based on the analysis of the the Comptroller of Public Accounts and TPWD, which are in alignment. For the purposes of this analysis, projected revenue losses do not consider significant demographic or park visitation changes. The only demographic data collected by the agency for entrance fees are zip codes.

Based on information provided by TPWD, it is assumed that duties and responsibilities associated with

implementing the provisions of the bill could be accomplished utilizing existing resources.

Local Government Impact

No significant fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

Source Agencies: 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts, 802 Parks and Wildlife Department

LBB Staff: JMc, SZ, MW, EJ, CSMI