

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 3359

By: Garcia, Josey

Homeland Security, Public Safety & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the Texas Veterans Commission's (TVC) 2024 Needs Assessment, 52 percent of Texas veterans reported that their fellow veterans do not understand the benefits for which they qualify, while 40 percent of veterans reported that veterans do not know where to get help. The bill author has informed the committee that creating more avenues for veterans to self-identify would allow TVC the opportunity to enhance outreach efforts, helping to ensure that veterans have access to services before crises arise. H.B. 3359 seeks to expand the avenues for veterans to self-identify and be identified by state agencies in order to help ensure that veterans are aware of and have access to the benefits available to them.

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. 3359 amends the Election Code to require each official voter registration application form, in addition to the other statements and spaces for entering information that appears on an officially prescribed registration application form, to include a space or box for indicating whether the applicant served in the U.S. armed forces, including their reserve components, an auxiliary service of one of the branches of the armed forces, or the state military forces as defined by Government Code provisions relating to the state militia, and a statement acknowledging the following:

- providing information relating to the applicant's status as a veteran is optional; and
- such information will remain confidential and will be used only to print a designation on the voter registration certificate and to provide notification of the applicant's veteran status to the Texans Veterans Commission (TVC), which may contact the applicant to connect the applicant with available services.

The bill restricts the use of that information furnished by an applicant to purposes described by the bill's provisions relating to the compilation of registration applications by an applicable voter registrar or provisions, as amended by the bill, relating to the required contents of a voter registration certificate. This requirement applies only to a voter registration application distributed on or after September 1, 2025. A voter registration application distributed before September 1, 2025, is covered by the law in effect when the application was distributed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

H.B. 3359 makes an applicant's status as a veteran as furnished on a voter registration application confidential and establishes that such information does not constitute public information under state public information law. The bill prohibits the voter registrar or other county official who has access to information furnished on a voter registration application from posting an applicant's status as a veteran on a website. However, the bill requires the voter registrar to compile a list of each submitted voter registration application that indicates the applicant served in the U.S. armed forces, including their reserve components, an auxiliary service of one of the branches of the armed forces, or the state military forces. The list must include each applicant's residence address and telephone number, if provided by the applicant. The bill requires the secretary of state to adopt procedures for the transmission of such information relating to an applicant's service in the U.S. armed forces to TVC.

H.B. 3359 requires each voter registration certificate issued to contain an indication that the voter is a "veteran," if the voter stated on the voter's registration application that the voter served in the U.S. armed forces, including their reserve components, an auxiliary service of one of the branches of the armed forces, or the state military forces.

H.B. 3359 prohibits the information furnished by the secretary of state in the statewide computerized voter registration list from including the voter's status as a veteran, if the voter stated on the voter's registration application that the voter served in the U.S. armed forces, including their reserve components, an auxiliary service of one of the branches of the armed forces, or the state military forces.

H.B. 3359 repeals the Transportation Code requirement for the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to provide the one-page informational paper jointly developed by DPS and TVC about veterans services provided by the state to the recipient of a driver's license or a personal identification certificate with an applicable veteran designation at the time the license or certificate is issued. However, the bill amends the Transportation Code to require DPS to do the following instead:

- provide to each applicant for an original, renewal, corrected, or duplicate driver's license or personal identification certificate the opportunity to voluntarily indicate that the person is a veteran; and
- acknowledge that providing that information is optional and that the information will remain confidential and will be used only to do the following:
 - provide the applicant with that informational paper; and
 - provide notification of the applicant's veteran status to TVC, which may contact the applicant to connect the applicant with available services.

For these purposes and for the purpose of clarifying that DPS and TVC must both provide the paper to each person who voluntarily indicates to DPS that the person is a veteran, the bill defines "veteran" as a person who satisfies the following conditions:

- receives a driver's license with an applicable veteran designation;
- receives a personal identification certificate with an applicable veteran designation; or
- served in the U.S. armed forces, including their reserve components, an auxiliary service of one of the branches of the armed forces, or the state military forces, and did not request or is not eligible for such a designation on their driver's license or personal identification certificate.

H.B. 3359 requires DPS and TVC to jointly develop a process to enable DPS to share with TVC a person's name, veteran status, and residence address received under these provisions. The bill authorizes TVC to contact the person to connect the person with veterans services provided by the state and makes information received by DPS and TVC under these provisions confidential and excepted from disclosure under state public information law.

H.B. 3359 applies only to an application for a driver's license or personal identification certificate issued or renewed on or after the bill's effective date. An application for a driver's license or personal identification certificate issued or renewed before the bill's effective date is

governed by the law in effect when the license or certificate was issued or renewed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

H.B. 3359 repeals Sections 521.102(c) and 521.1235(c), Transportation Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.