

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3642
By: Hefner
Transportation
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill author has informed the committee that Petty Officer Billy Wayne Machen, who was killed in the line of duty on August 19, 1966, was the first U.S. Navy SEAL to be killed in combat in the Vietnam war and that as a point man for his team, Machen led his fellow SEALs through the jungle, sensing something was wrong and sacrificing his own life by taking on an enemy ambush alone to save his troops waiting behind.

The bill author has also informed the committee that in the summer of 2024, nine-year old Molly Mullens was killed in a head-on collision when driving home from Colorado with her family, and that after learning from local law enforcement that the stretch of highway is a known accident "hot spot," the Mullens family worked to improve safety by replacing the cable barriers with concrete barriers, hoping to prevent future accidents.

The bill author has further informed the committee that on September 17, Highway Patrol Trooper Kevin Alexis Ramirez Vasquez was struck by a vehicle while investigating a traffic crash along State Highway 302 and that, tragically, Trooper Ramirez Vasquez succumbed to his injuries on September 28, becoming the 241st Department of Public Safety officer to die in the line of duty since 1823.

C.S.H.B. 3642 seeks to honor the lives and legacies of these individuals by designating certain portions of the state highway system as memorial highways and bridges in their honor.

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

C.S.H.B. 3642 amends the Transportation Code to designate certain portions of the state highway system as the following memorial highways and bridges:

- the Farm-to-Market Road 852 bridge crossing Lake Gilmer in Upshur County as the Petty Officer Billy Machen Memorial Bridge, in addition to any other designation;
- the portion of U.S. Highway 287 in Wilbarger County between its intersection with County Road 111 and County Road 132 East as the Molly Mullens Mile, in addition to any other designation; and

- the portion of State Highway 302 in Ector County between its intersection with Farm-to-Market Road 2019 and the Ector-Winkler County line as the Trooper Kevin Ramirez Vasquez Memorial Highway.

Subject to a grant or donation of funds, the bill requires the Texas Department of Transportation to do the following:

- design and construct markers indicating the designations as the Petty Officer Billy Machen Memorial Bridge, the Molly Mullens Mile, and the Trooper Kevin Ramirez Vasquez Memorial Highway, as applicable, and any other appropriate information;
- erect a marker at each end of the Petty Officer Billy Machen Memorial Bridge; and
- erect a marker at each end of the Molly Mullens Mile and the Trooper Kevin Ramirez Vasquez Memorial Highway, and at appropriate intermediate sites along each highway.

The bill establishes the legislature's intent that the bill's provisions be renumbered to prevent multiple provisions with the same designation.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3642 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the designation of the Farm-to-Market Road 852 bridge crossing Lake Gilmer in Upshur County from the Petty Officer Billy Machen Bridge, as in the introduced, to the Petty Officer Billy Machen Memorial Bridge. Whereas the introduced designated the applicable portion of U.S. Highway 287 in Wilbarger County as the Molly Mullens Memorial Highway, the substitute designates that portion as the Molly Mullens Mile.