

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1563
By: Menéndez
Intergovernmental Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill sponsor has informed the committee that veterans often face unique mental health and behavioral health challenges stemming from their military service and distinct culture and that, because of their military experience, many veterans suffer from mental health disorders, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and physical injuries at a higher rate than their non-veteran counterparts. According to the 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there were 6,407 suicides among veterans in 2022. Although the report identified some promising trends regarding a decrease in suicide rates among part of the veteran population, the bill sponsor has also informed the committee that this critical issue still needs to be addressed and that, without the proper support, veterans can often go months or years without addressing existing or emergent behavioral health concerns. The bill sponsor has further informed the committee that veterans can often become incarcerated as a result of the manifestation of unaddressed or unsupported behavioral health issues, struggles to adjust to civilian life, or an overall lack of access to a supportive community and that many justice-impacted veterans may not be aware of the benefits they can receive while incarcerated. Additionally, the bill sponsor has informed the committee that, in 2019, veterans made up an estimated 10 percent of the state's county jail population and that, because county jails serve as some of the largest mental health providers in many counties in Texas, county jailers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to support veterans. S.B. 1563 seeks to address these issues by requiring the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission, to develop a training program for county jailers on interacting with veterans in the criminal justice system.

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. 1563 amends the Occupations Code to require the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission, to develop a training program for county jailers on interacting with veterans in the criminal justice system. The bill requires the training program to be included in the preparatory training that a person must satisfactorily complete before being appointed as a county jailer on a permanent basis.

S.B. 1563 applies to a licensed county jailer regardless of whether their license was issued before, on, or after the bill's effective date. The bill requires a county jailer who, on the bill's

effective date, holds a county jailer license to complete the training program required by the bill not later than August 31, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.