

**SUBJECT:** Establishing higher education degree plans for Texas military members

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Howard, E. Johnson, Schaefer, Walle

0 nays

3 absent — Pacheco, Smithee, Wilson

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dana Chiodo, CompTIA; Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers)

Against — None

On — Robert Bodisch, Texas Military Department

**BACKGROUND:** Government Code sec. 437.001 defines "active military service" as state active duty service, federally funded state active duty service, or federal active duty service. The term does not include service performed exclusively for training, such as basic combat training, advanced individual training, annual training, inactive duty training, and special training periodically made available to service members.

Interested parties have suggested that the Texas State Guard could benefit from additional ways to improve recruitment and retention to better meet the State Guard's goal of doubling authorized forces by 2021.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 3601 would authorize the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to approve an institution of higher education recognized by the board to offer a degree in coordination with the Texas Military Department that used alternative methods of determining mastery of content, including competency-based education.

To be eligible for the degree, a person would have to be a high school graduate or possess an equivalent diploma, complete and meet the standards of the degree plan, and satisfy a minimum active military service obligation to the Texas military forces. The minimum active military service requirements would entail:

- two years of service for an associate degree;
- four years of service for a baccalaureate degree; and
- six years of service for a graduate degree.

THECB could propose rules to establish requirements under which a person's verified training and experience could serve as proof of subject matter knowledge.

CSHB 3601 would apply beginning with degree plans offered for enrollment for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.