

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
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C.S.S.B. 2001  
By: Garcia; Campbell  
Veteran Affairs & Military Installations  
4/17/2015  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Female veterans face numerous socio-economic challenges as they transition to civilian life. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, returning Iraq and Afghanistan female veterans had an 11.2 percent unemployment rate in November 2014. This is a full five percentage points higher than the unemployment rate of male veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. While the average male veteran is single, the average female veteran is a parent, if not a spouse. Fully one-quarter of female service members are themselves military spouses, and subject to the transient nature of being married to another service member. Having to move upwards of two to three times a year makes job placement and access to local veteran resources particularly difficult. With over 190,000 female veterans, Texas has the largest female veteran population in the nation. The economic and social challenges of our women veterans are a deterrent to our state's growth; helping them enter the work place and make use of veteran-connected services only increases our competitiveness.

Texas is currently the only state with a female veteran population over 50,000 that does not have a permanent program to address and study the needs of women veterans. By establishing a permanent Texas Women Veterans Program (TWVP), the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) will be better-equipped to address long-term systemic issues that face female veterans than through existing temporary initiatives. S.B. 2001 charges the TWVP with conducting assessment studies to better understand local factors that affect veteran women as they work to enter the workplace, and access public and private veteran-eligible benefits. This long-term research will contribute greatly towards reviewing existing programs and projects on their effectiveness in addressing the needs of the female veteran community, and is a function that existing temporary initiatives simply cannot provide. Importantly, the TWVP would be charged with fostering long-term relationships with veterans groups, county veteran service officers (VSOs) and local business leaders, as well as coordinate with local charities and affiliated veteran-supporting nonprofits to take a holistic approach in addressing the needs of the female veteran community. One of the most important functions the TWVP would provide is policy counsel on recommended legislative actions to be taken by the state government, as well as policy initiatives for local and national government entities. This will provide a crucial resource for long-term policymaking and evaluation that simply is not currently available.

The committee substitute cleans up the language in S.B. 2001 to specify that county and municipal veteran programs can participate in the collaboration and education components of the program, and adds a provision allowing TVC to accept charitable donations and participate in the establishment and operation of an affiliated nonprofit, for the purposes of supporting the TWVP.

C.S.S.B. 2001 amends current law relating to the establishment and operation of the Texas Women Veterans Program.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

## **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 434, Government Code, by adding Subchapter E, as follows:

### **SUBCHAPTER E. TEXAS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM**

Sec. 434.201. DEFINITIONS. Defines "commission," "executive director," "program," and "woman veteran."

Sec. 434.202. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM; PROGRAM MISSION. (a) Provides that the Texas Women Veterans Program (program) is established in the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). Provides that the program is attached to the office of the executive director of TVC (executive director) for administrative purposes.

(b) Provides that the mission of the program is to ensure that the women veterans of this state have equitable access to federal and state veterans' benefits and services.

Sec. 434.203. COORDINATOR. Requires the executive director to designate a women veterans coordinator for this state.

Sec. 434.204. GENERAL PROGRAM DUTIES. Requires that the program:

(1) provide assistance to the women veterans of this state as provided by this subchapter;

(2) perform outreach functions to improve the awareness of women veterans of their eligibility for federal and state veterans' benefits and services;

(3) assess the needs of women veterans with respect to benefits and services;

(4) review programs, research projects, and other initiatives designed to address the needs of the women veterans of this state;

(5) make recommendations to the executive director regarding the improvement of benefits and services to women veterans; and

(6) incorporate issues concerning women veterans in TVC planning regarding veterans' benefits and services.

Sec. 434.205. ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS. (a) Requires that the program advocate for women veterans and work to increase public awareness about the gender-specific needs of women veterans.

(b) Requires that the program recommend legislative initiatives and the development of policies on the local, state, and national levels to address the issues affecting women veterans.

Sec. 434.206. COLLABORATION. Requires that the program collaborate with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies that provide services to women veterans.

Sec. 434.207. RESEARCH; DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION. (a) Requires that the program monitor and research issues relating to women veterans.

(b) Requires that the program disseminate information regarding opportunities for women veterans throughout the network of entities with which the program collaborates.

Sec. 434.208. EDUCATION. Requires that the program, through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, municipal, and private agencies, provide

guidance and direction to a woman veteran who is applying for grants, benefits, or services.

Sec. 434.209. HONOR AND RECOGNITION. Requires that the program promote events and activities that recognize and honor the women veterans of this state and women who serve in the military.

Sec. 434.210. FACILITIES. Requires that the program, to the extent funding is available for that purpose, provide facilities as appropriate in support of the program.

Sec. 434.211. FUNDING; GRANTS. Authorizes TVC, on behalf of the program, to:

(1) accept and spend funds:

(A) appropriated to TVC for the operation of the program; and

(B) received from other sources, including donations and grants; and

(2) provide matching grants to assist in the implementation of the program's goals and objectives.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 434.017(e), Government Code, to authorize TVC to participate in the establishment and operation of an affiliated nonprofit organization that is established for the purpose of raising money for or providing services or other benefits to TVC or a program established in TVC, including the Texas Women Veterans Program.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.