

# Allowing Texas Veterinary Board to hire and commission peace officers

HB 1099 by Guillen (Hinojosa)

## Digest

HB 1099 would have allowed the Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to employ and commission certified peace officers to enforce the Veterinary Licensing Act. If the board commissioned peace officers, it would have had to designate one as a chief investigator.

## Governor's reason for veto

“House Bill 1099 would allow the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to hire peace officers to investigate violations of the Veterinary Licensing Act. Legislation was passed last session to help the Board develop an effective way to inspect and monitor the potential diversion of controlled substances at veterinarians' offices, and to consistently implement its enforcement procedures. The Board should use its existing tools instead of creating more state-commissioned peace officers and seeking out new tasks related to supervising those officers.”

## Response

**Rep. Ryan Guillen**, the bill's author, could not be reached for comment on the veto.

**Sen. Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa**, the Senate sponsor, said, “Whereas medical doctors can only stock a 72-hour supply of controlled substances, veterinarians are different from other practitioners in that their ability to stockpile and dispense controlled substances is unlimited. No state or federal agency comprehensively tracks the total amount of controlled substances flowing through Texas veterinarians as they prescribe and dispense directly to clients. What's more, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) provided data that showed that from 2012 to 2016, veterinarians in Texas had reported more than 53,000 dosage units as lost or stolen, compared to medical doctors reporting 6,803 instances.

“The Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners' lack of peace officer status hampers the board's ability to interact and exchange information with various state or federal law enforcement organizations, such as DEA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Texas Racing Commission. State and federal law enforcement agencies have difficulty providing information to board investigators due to laws prohibiting the release of criminal justice information to non-criminal justice personnel. The commissioning of board investigators would allow for the exchange of information and help with the potential theft and abuse of controlled substances. We have an opioid epidemic in our state.”

## Notes

The HRO analysis of [HB 1099](#) appeared in Part Two of the April 17 *Daily Floor Report*.