

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 867
By: Hernandez
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that female veterans face numerous socioeconomic challenges as they transition to civilian life. The parties assert that the economic and social challenges of Texas' female veterans can be a hindrance to economic growth. C.S.H.B. 867 seeks to address these issues and help increase Texas' economic competitiveness.

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. 867 amends the Government Code to establish the Texas Women Veterans Program in the Texas Veterans Commission to ensure that the women veterans of Texas have equitable access to federal and state veterans' benefits and services. The bill specifies that the program is attached to the office of the executive director of the commission for administrative purposes and requires the executive director to designate a women veterans coordinator.

C.S.H.B. 867 requires the program to provide assistance to women veterans; to perform outreach functions to improve women veterans' awareness of their eligibility for federal and state veterans' benefits and services; to assess women veterans' needs with respect to benefits and services; to review programs, research projects, and other initiatives designed to address women veterans' needs; to make recommendations to the executive director regarding the improvement of benefits and services to women veterans; and to incorporate issues concerning women veterans in commission planning regarding veterans' benefits and services. The bill requires the program to advocate for women veterans and work to increase public awareness about the gender-specific needs of women veterans and to recommend legislative initiatives and local, state, and national level policy development to address the issues affecting women veterans. The bill requires the program to collaborate with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies that provide services to women veterans, to monitor and research issues relating to women veterans, and to disseminate information regarding opportunities for women veterans throughout the network of entities with which the program collaborates.

C.S.H.B. 867 requires the program to provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran who is applying for grants, benefits, or services through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies; to promote events and activities that recognize and honor the women veterans of Texas and women who serve in the military; and, to the extent funding is available, to provide facilities as appropriate in support of the program. The

bill authorizes the commission, on behalf of the program, to accept and spend funds appropriated to the commission for the operation of the program and funds received from other sources, including donations and grants, and to provide matching grants to assist in the implementation of the program's goals and objectives.

C.S.H.B. 867 authorizes the commission 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 a program established in the commission, including the Texas Women Veterans Program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 867 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

INTRODUCED

SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter E to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER E. TEXAS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

Sec. 434.201. DEFINITIONS.

Sec. 434.202. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM; PROGRAM MISSION

Sec. 434.203. COORDINATOR.

Sec. 434.204. GENERAL PROGRAM DUTIES.

Sec. 434.205. ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS.

Sec. 434.206. COLLABORATION. The program shall collaborate with federal, state, and private agencies that provide services to women veterans.

Sec. 434.207. RESEARCH; DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.

Sec. 434.208. EDUCATION. Through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, and private agencies, the program shall provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran who is applying for grants, benefits, or services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter E to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER E. TEXAS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

Sec. 434.201. DEFINITIONS.

Sec. 434.202. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM; PROGRAM MISSION.

Sec. 434.203. COORDINATOR.

Sec. 434.204. GENERAL PROGRAM DUTIES.

Sec. 434.205. ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC AWARENESS.

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

Sec. 434.207. RESEARCH; DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.

Sec. 434.208. EDUCATION. Through conferences, seminars, and training workshops with federal, state, county, municipal, and private agencies, the program shall provide guidance and direction to a woman veteran who is applying for grants, benefits, or services.

Sec. 434.209. HONOR AND RECOGNITION.

Sec. 434.210. FACILITIES.

Sec. 434.211. FUNDING. On behalf of the program, the executive director may accept and spend funds:

- (1) appropriated to the commission for the operation of the program; and
- (2) received from other sources, including donations and grants.

No equivalent provision.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2015.

Sec. 434.209. HONOR AND RECOGNITION.

Sec. 434.210. FACILITIES.

Sec. 434.211. FUNDING; GRANTS. On behalf of the program, the commission may:

- (1) accept and spend funds:
 - (A) appropriated to the commission 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. Section 434.017(e), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(e) To carry out any purpose of this chapter, the commission may solicit, accept, or refuse a gift, grant, devise, bequest of money, security, service, or property, including money raised or a service provided by a volunteer or volunteer group, to promote the work of the commission for any purpose related to the fund for veterans' assistance. The commission may 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 the commission or a program established in the commission, including the Texas Women Veterans Program. A gift, grant, devise, or bequest to the fund may be appropriated in the same manner as other money in the fund, subject to the purposes provided by Subsection (c) and any limitation or requirement placed on the gift, grant, devise, or bequest by the donor or granting entity.

SECTION 3. Same as introduced version.