

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1580
By: Garcia
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to interested parties, despite the fact that Texas has one of the most vibrant economies in the nation, Texas also has the third highest homeless veteran population in the United States, with estimates of more than 2,500 veterans experiencing homelessness on any given night in 2014. The number of homeless veterans raises concerns among observers who note that homeless individuals frequently are exposed to a barrage of stressful and traumatic experiences that have profound effects on a person's ability to cope, develop, and learn and that such vulnerable individuals tend to exhibit high rates of mental illness, chronic health problems, and other negative conditions that can be correlated with an unstable and dangerous living environment. The parties assert that a study to examine homelessness would begin a process for the state to address this problem and allow for all Texans to prosper. S.B. 1580 seeks to provide for a more accurate depiction of the challenges that people experiencing homelessness face and possibly more viable solutions for homeless veterans.

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. 1580 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), in conjunction with other members of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless, to conduct a study and prepare a report on homeless veterans. The bill defines "homeless veteran" for the purposes of the study and requires the report to include a summary of the information resulting from the study and recommendations for changes in law necessary to provide services to or otherwise assist homeless veterans. The bill requires TDHCA, in preparing the report, to compile existing data on the number of homeless veterans in Texas, to summarize existing studies regarding the needs of homeless veterans and identify the degree to which current programs are meeting those needs, to identify existing sources of funding available to members of the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless to provide housing and services to homeless veterans, and to develop recommendations for reducing veteran homelessness in Texas. The bill requires TDHCA to submit the report to the legislature not later than December 1, 2016. The bill's provisions expire September 1, 2017.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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