

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1045
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been expressed that veterans are not adequately considered with regard to state suicide data. C.S.H.B. 1045 seeks to improve policymakers' understanding of the incidence of veteran suicides.

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. 1045 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to develop and maintain a system for tracking the number of veteran suicides in Texas and determining the number of those veterans who received services from the VA. The bill requires the tracking system to include data available from the VA and data reported to the TVC under the bill's provisions. The bill requires the TVC to develop the tracking system not later than December 31, 2019. The bill requires a person who knows that the cause of death for a veteran is suicide to report the suicide to the TVC and provide any information the person has that may assist the TVC in determining whether the veteran received services from the VA. Beginning January 1, 2020, the bill specifically requires a medical examiner or a justice of the peace who is acting as a coroner, a licensed health care facility, or a mental health facility to provide to the TVC any relevant information that official or facility, as applicable, obtains related to the suicide death of a veteran.

C.S.H.B. 1045 establishes that information about the suicide of a veteran obtained under the bill's provisions is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under state public information law, is not subject to subpoena, and may not otherwise be released or made public. The bill requires the TVC, beginning in 2020, to submit a report regarding veteran suicides to the legislature not later than December 31 of each year and sets out the required contents of the report.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1045 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the entity required to carry out the bill's provisions from the Texas Women Veterans Program to the TVC.

The substitute expands the type of suicides to be tracked and reported from women veteran suicides to all veteran suicides.