

- SUBJECT:** Veteran representation on local workforce development board
- COMMITTEE:** Economic Development — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — B. Cook, Anchia, Deshotel, Kolkhorst, McCall
0 nays
2 absent — Ritter, Seaman
- WITNESSES:** For — John A. Brieden III, American Legion; Michael Palmquist, The American Legion Department of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Luis Macias, Texas Workforce Commission; John McKinny, Veteran's Employment and Training, U.S. Department of Labor)
- BACKGROUND:** The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) aims to improve the quality of the workforce and reduce welfare dependency. The WIA also sets forth conditions under which state and local governments may receive funding.

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the state agency responsible for carrying out the responsibilities of the WIA. TWC administers the local workforce development boards, which are responsible for planning and overseeing certain responsibilities of the WIA.

Government Code, ch. 2308 is also known as the Workforce Investment Act. Under sec. 2308.256, workforce development boards across the state must include people who represent certain sectors such as organized labor, educational agencies, private sector business, and public assistance agencies. At least one of the representatives must be a veteran. The precise number of members of a local board is decided by the local elected officials who created that board.

For the purposes of this chapter, a veteran generally is a person who has served in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or Marine Corps

or who has served in state military forces or who has served in auxiliary service of one of those branches and has been honorably discharged.

DIGEST: HB 720 would amend Government Code, sec. 2308.256(h) to specify that a board member appointed as a veteran would represent the workforce development interests of local veterans.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005, and would apply to a local workforce development board created on or after that date. Officials responsible for boards that were created before September 1, 2005, would appoint new members that would reflect the requirements of the bill as vacancies occurred.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Some who serve on local workforce development boards as designated veterans may not be aware that they are the designated veterans on the board. Such a person may have been appointed primarily as a representative of another interest and secondarily appointed as a veteran. HB 720 would clarify that a person who served as a veteran on such a board would represent the local workforce development interests of veterans even if that person also wore a "second hat" on the board. This person could continue to represent the other constituency as well.

Although the interests of veterans might be strengthened even more with a single position for veterans, rather than one position representing two or more interests, this could be difficult to accomplish. Texas is in step with the federal WIA Act, but changing the composition of a board could put federal funding in jeopardy. Also, rules require that a certain percentage of the board have certain characteristics, and if another seat were added, it could change the equation enough that it would be challenging to meet composition requirements.

OPPONENTS SAY: The interests of veterans might be strengthened even more if the statute designated a single board position for veterans, rather than having one person represent both veterans and another constituency.