

- SUBJECT:** Hazardous duty pay for certain correctional officers
- COMMITTEE:** Corrections — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Madden, Hochberg, McReynolds, Haggerty, Jones
0 nays
2 absent — Dunnam, Oliveira
- WITNESSES:** For — Arlan Foster; Brian E. Olsen, Afscme/CEC7; Ray Stewart; Marian Terry; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Ana Yanez-Correa, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition)
Against — None
On — Brad Livingston, Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- BACKGROUND:** Under Government Code, Title 6, public officers who perform hazardous duties are eligible for extra pay. Correctional officers employed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) receive hazardous duty pay for working in direct contact with offenders.
Under Government Code, sec. 659.305, eligible employees, including full-time correctional officers, receive in hazardous duty pay for a particular month the lesser of:
- \$10 for each 12-month period of lifetime service credit; or
 - \$300.
- DIGEST:** HB 2498 would amend Government Code, sec. 659.305 to increase the hazardous duty pay for full-time correctional officers employed by TDCJ. For a particular month, an eligible correctional officer would receive the lesser of:
- \$12 for each 12-month period of lifetime service credit accrued; or
 - \$300.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2498 appropriately would increase the hazardous duty pay for correctional officers, who work directly with offenders and face stressful and dangerous work environments. The increasingly violent criminal population enhances the hazards officers experience in the line of duty. Several correctional officers have been killed on the job. To compensate correctional officers for risking their lives through professional service, the state of Texas should increase hazardous duty pay.

This bill would demonstrate to state correctional officers that the state values their service. An increase in hazardous pay would boost the morale of such officers. Moreover, the increase in pay from \$10 to \$12 for each year of full-time service could help the state retain correctional officers. Correctional officers currently are at the lower end of the salary scale and deserve this slight increase in hazardous duty pay.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

While the work performed by correctional officers is admirable, this bill would cost the state \$5 million annually. Other state employees besides TDCJ correctional officers perform hazardous duties, and this bill could lead to calls for increased compensation on their behalf.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the increase in hazardous duty pay for correctional officers would cost the state \$10 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09.