

SUBJECT: Increasing payments to survivors of those killed in the line of duty

COMMITTEE: Pensions — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Flynn, Alonzo, Klick, Paul, J. Rodriguez, Stephenson

0 nays

1 absent — Hernandez

WITNESSES: For — Charley Wilkison, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; Amanda Hurst; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ricky Hollis; Donald Zavodny, AFSCME Texas Corrections; Randy Moreno, Austin Firefighters Association; Chris Jones, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT); Amy Ramon, Cy-Fair Volunteer Fire Department; Michael Richardson, Decatur Fire Department; Dan Key, Friendswood Volunteer Fire Department; David Sinclair, Game Warden Peace Officers Association; Ray Hunt, Houston Police Officers' Union; Bill Elkin, Houston Police Retired Officers Association; Sean Dailey, Houston Professional Firefighters Association; Aidan Alvarado, Laredo Firefighters; David Stacy, Midland Firemen's Relief and Retirement Fund; Joe Carrillo, San Antonio Police Officers Association; Jimmy Rodriguez, San Antonio Police Officers Association; Rusty Kattner, Santa Fire and Rescue; Bill Gardner, State Firemen and Fire Marshals Association; Joe Franco, TABC Officers Association; Harry Nanos, TABC Officers Association; Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Kaleb McLaurin, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association; Larry McGinnis, Texas Department of Public Safety Officers Association; Glenn Deshields, Texas State Association of Fire Fighters; Harrison Hiner, Texas State Employees Union; Deborah Ingersoll, Texas State Troopers Association; Lon Craft, Texas Municipal Police Association)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Robin Hardaway, Employees

Retirement System)

BACKGROUND: Government Code, sec. 615.022 provides for payments of \$250,000 to the survivors of law enforcement officers, firefighters, and certain other public employees killed in the line of duty. Sec. 615.023 provides for monthly payments ranging from \$200 to \$400 to surviving minor children, depending on the number of children.

Noting that the lump sum survivors' benefit has not increased in more than a decade and the monthly benefit for surviving children has not increased in about four decades, some have called for reasonable increases in benefits to meet the rising cost of inflation for the families of those public servants who sacrificed their lives serving their communities.

DIGEST: CSHB 1278 would double the state's payment to survivors of peace officers, firefighters, prison guards, and certain other public employees killed in the line of duty. An eligible surviving spouse would receive \$500,000. If there were no surviving spouse, the state would make the payment in equal shares to surviving children. If there were no surviving spouse or child, the payment would go in equal shares to surviving parents. The bill would require the following monthly payments to eligible surviving minor children:

- \$400 for one child;
- \$600 for two children; and
- \$800 for three or more children.

The monthly payments would end on the last day of the month that includes the child's 18th birthday.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015, and would apply to payments made on or after that date.

NOTES: The Legislative Budget Board estimates the bill would have a negative impact of \$6.7 million for fiscal 2016-17.