

SUBJECT: Including all state military forces in the state group benefits program

COMMITTEE: Defense and Veterans' Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — S. King, Frank, Blanco, Farias, Schaefer, Shaheen
0 nays
1 present, not voting — Aycock

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — None
On — Duane Waddill, Texas Military Department; John Nichols, Texas Military Forces

BACKGROUND: Under the federal Affordable Care Act, all employees are required to have access to affordable health insurance coverage within 90 days of beginning employment.

When state military forces are deployed on a federal mission, or deployed on a state mission by the federal government, those members receive federal health insurance benefits within 90 days of beginning duty. Currently, Government Code, sec. 437.212, which governs pay and benefits for state active military duty, does not cover members of the state military forces who are paid by the state while on active duty on a state mission.

DIGEST: CSHB 2123 would include members of the state military forces who were not full-time or part-time state employees to be eligible to participate in the state group benefits program under the Texas Employees Group Benefits Act. The bill would reduce from more than 90 to more than 60 the number of days the employee would have to be on active duty, state training, or other duty to be eligible.

These members would be considered full-time employees for the purpose of the state benefits program and would receive a full state contribution for insurance coverage. CSHB 2123 would authorize the Texas Military Department to require payment of the cost associated with paying the state contribution of a service member who elected to participate in the state group benefits program from the person who was responsible for paying the mission for which the service member was on duty.

The bill also would require the department to reimburse the board of trustees of the Employees Retirement System (ERS) of Texas for the cost of paying the state contribution of a member, for which purpose the adjutant general and ERS would adopt a memorandum of understanding.

This bill would take effect January 1, 2016.