

SUBJECT: Creating a database for employers to qualify veterans' skills, experience

COMMITTEE: Defense and Veterans' Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Gutierrez, Arévalo, Cain, Flynn, Lambert

0 nays

2 absent — Blanco, Wilson

WITNESSES: For — Jim Brennan, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations;  
(*Registered, but did not testify*: Mackenna Wehmeyer, Career Colleges and Schools of Texas; Lashondra Jones, Catholic Charities; Donna Warndof, Harris County Human Resources and Risk Management; Joseph Green, Travis County Commissioners Court; Olivia Bush, Women Veteran Services, Catholic Charities; Romaine Barnett, Women Veteran Services, CCGH)

Against — None

On — Doyle Fuchs, Texas Workforce Commission; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tim Shatto, Texas Veterans Commission; Bob Gear Jr., Texas Workforce Commission)

DIGEST: CSHB 827 would require the Texas Workforce Commission to develop and maintain or make available an online searchable database that prospective employers could use to qualify a veteran's military service experience and employment qualifications related to specific skills. The database would convert a veteran's military service experience into the approximate equivalent civilian employment experience and skills. The commission could adopt rules to implement the database and would have to develop and maintain it or make it available as soon as practicable after the bill took effect.

The database could not collect, retrieve, store, or use any identifying information of a veteran.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 827 would help veterans secure employment by providing prospective employers with a tool to translate a veteran's relative military experience and employment qualifications into qualifications companies are seeking in a prospective employee. This is critical because the unemployment rate among post-9/11 veterans consistently has been higher than the national unemployment rate, largely due to problems associated with employers lacking the necessary information to understand the military-to-civilian skills translation.

The Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services estimates that some 22,000 service members stationed in Texas will be transitioning into civilian life during the next two years, about 30 percent of whom will seek work in Texas. CSHB 827 would complement a number of state initiatives created to increase opportunities for these veterans.

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) could use existing resources to implement the bill. It could employ digital infrastructure already in use to process the military-to-civilian skills translation for veterans searching for jobs. By directing the TWC either to develop and maintain or to make available the database to employers, the bill would ensure that the commission was not duplicating or increasing the scope of its existing efforts. TWC also would not be duplicating existing federal efforts, which are tailored for veterans seeking employment and not for employers.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Although well intentioned, CSHB 827 would duplicate efforts already undertaken by the federal government and non-profit organizations to help veterans transition back into civilian employment. These efforts are best focused at the federal level so as not to increase the scope of state government unnecessarily.

**NOTES:**

CSHB 827 differs from the bill as filed by requiring the Texas Workforce

Commission to develop and maintain or make available the database,  
rather than directing it only to develop and maintain the database.