

SUBJECT: Limiting eligible veterans' vehicles for toll discount programs to two

COMMITTEE: Defense and Veterans' Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Flynn, Tinderholt, Ashby, Lopez, Lozano, Ramos, Reynolds, Romero

0 nays

1 absent — Hinojosa

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 11 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: For — Edwin Grantham, Helping A Hero; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Tim Joniec)

Against — None

On — Jim Brennan, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations; Brian Ragland, Texas Department of Transportation; (*Registered, but did not testify:* James Cunningham, Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations, Texas Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association of America; Tim Thompson, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles)

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code sec. 372.053 allows toll project entities to establish discount programs for electronic toll collection customers. These programs must include free or discounted use of the toll road for a vehicle registered with specialty license plates that indicates the vehicle belongs to a veteran with disabilities or to a person who has received certain military honors.

It has been noted that there currently is no limit on the number of toll transponders that can be issued to an eligible veteran. The Texas Department of Transportation pays for the waived toll fees, and concerns have been raised that without a cap the program could become too expensive to continue.

DIGEST:

CSSB 1091 would permit a toll project entity to limit to two the number of transponders issued to a participant in the entity's toll waiver program for disabled veterans and persons with certain military honors. If a toll project entity adopted this limit, the entity would have to issue one extra transponder to a program participant on a demonstration of hardship, as determined by the entity.

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, 2019.