

SUBJECT: Permitting remote participation of a soldier in a marriage ceremony

COMMITTEE: Juvenile Justice and Family Issues — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Neave, Swanson, Cook, Frank, Leach, Ramos, Talarico, Vasut, Wu

WITNESSES: For — Rogelio Lopez, Justice of the Peace, Precinct 4, Bexar County; Nicholas Chu, Justices of the Peace and Constables Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Amy Bresnen and Bill Morris, Texas Family Law Foundation; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — Taran Champagne; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Monie Ulis, Texas Military Department; Jeffrey Morgan)

BACKGROUND: Family Code subch. A, sec. 2.007, governing the application for a marriage license by an absent applicant, states that the affidavit of an absent applicant must include the appointment of any adult, other than the other applicant, to act as a proxy for the purpose of participating in the ceremony, if the absent applicant is:

- a member of the armed forces of the United States stationed in another country in support of combat or another military operation; and
- unable to attend the ceremony.

Interested parties have called for allowing a member of the armed forces who is stationed in another country and is unable to attend the marriage ceremony to be given the option to participate in the ceremony through the use of video conference technology as an alternative to appointing a proxy for the purpose of participating in the ceremony.

DIGEST: HB 675 would provide an absent applicant for a marriage license who was a member of the armed forces of the United States stationed in another

country in support of combat or another military operation and was unable to attend the marriage ceremony to include in their affidavit a statement indicating that the applicant preferred to participate in the ceremony through the use of video conference technology, if available, as an alternative to the appointment of a proxy to participate in the ceremony. The bill would allow the absent applicant to participate in the ceremony through video conference technology.

An office of the justice of the peace that had video conference technology for courtroom use would be authorized to make the technology available for use in a marriage ceremony conducted by a justice of the peace.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.