

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
83R2906 JRR-D

H.B. 634  
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Criminal Justice  
4/26/2013  
Engrossed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Currently, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) relies on offenders to self-report their military service during its initial intake process for offenders. TDCJ previously provided this data to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which verified veteran status, but the VA stopped participating in the data exchange. TDCJ also attempts to identify veterans through its re-entry case managers, who conduct a needs assessment to identify the offender's pre-release and post-release needs. During this assessment interview, the offender is questioned about his or her prior military service. Based on the offender's response, appropriate services are offered.

Similarly, county jails in Texas are required to meet the minimum standards set forth by TDCJ. These standards require county jails to complete a screening form for suicide, medical, and mental impairments for each person who is booked into the county jail. One of the questions on this screening form asks about previous military service and is a self-report measure.

Veteran status is currently exchanged with the Health and Human Services Commission as part of the Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) and a pilot program mandated by the legislature to identify and assist veterans currently receiving public assistance. While this self-reported information is a useful point for providing assistance to veterans, it would be more valuable if veteran status was verified by the VA.

H.B. 634 seeks to verify an offender's VA status in the TDCJ system by using data made available through PARIS.

H.B. 634 amends current law relating to the verification of an inmate's veteran status by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 501, Government Code, by adding Section 501.023, as follows:

Sec. 501.023. VERIFICATION OF INMATE VETERAN STATUS. (a) Defines, in this section, "system" to mean the Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) operated by the Administration for Children and Families of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

(b) Requires the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to investigate and verify the veteran status of each inmate by using data made available from the system through the Health and Human Services Commission and use system data to assist inmates who are veterans in applying for federal benefits or compensation for which the inmates are authorized to be eligible under a program administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.