

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 1679
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Veteran Affairs & Border Security
4/26/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Veterans county service officers (VCSOs) serve as a point of contact for many veterans throughout this state. Unfortunately, VCSOs are an unfunded mandate, and the state does not provide any funding for these offices that are located in counties of a population of more than 200,000.

As stated in the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations (VAMI) report, "Each office operates differently based off of need and resources available. The only state funding allocated for VCSOs is provided for covering the cost of one of the TVC training conferences VCSOs are required to attend. All operating costs are at the expense of the county, and due to this, many offices have few resources or personnel available to meet the numerous and varied needs of the veterans they work so hard serve." As a result, counties pay all other expenses incurred by the veterans county service office.

S.B. 1679 supports VCSOs' efforts to assist veterans by providing a source of direct funding for the VCSOs. By allowing a certain amount of money to be appropriated to the VCSOs, they can expand and increase the quality of service and efficiently tend to the needs of the veterans they help every day. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 1679 amends current law relating to the use of the fund for veterans' assistance to provide grants to support veterans county service offices.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Veterans Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 434.017, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 434.017, Government Code, by adding Subsection (c-3) and amending Subsection (d), as follows:

(c-3) Requires the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), in making the grants required under Subsection (c) (relating to requiring TVC to use certain funds to address veterans' needs and certain administrative purposes), to use at least five percent of the money appropriated to TVC under that subsection in each state fiscal year to provide grants to veterans county service offices (offices) as provided by Section 434.032 (Creation). Requires an office that receives a grant under Subsection (c) to use the money to provide direct assistance and services to veterans residing in the county served by that office. Authorizes TVC, on July 1 of each state fiscal year, if TVC has not received sufficient grant requests from to make grants to the offices in the amount of five percent of the money appropriated to TVC under Subsection (c) in that state fiscal year, to use any amount of the five percent remaining on that date for any purpose authorized under that subsection. Prohibits this subsection from being construed to prevent TVC from using more than five percent of the money appropriated to TVC under Subsection (c) to provide grants to offices.

(d) Requires TVC to adopt rules governing the award of grants to offices under Subsection (c-3).

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2017.