

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R10744 YDB-F

S.B. 2047
By: Zaffirini
Veteran Affairs & Border Security
3/25/2019
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

As veterans return from active duty and resume their daily lives, they often face numerous legal challenges including foreclosures, difficulties accessing military benefits, homelessness stemming from evictions, debt collection, phone harassment, child custody disputes, and divorce, among others. Accordingly, access to legal aid is indispensable for Texas veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life.

S.B. 2047 would exempt a Texas attorney from paying bar membership dues if, during the preceding year, he or she provided a certain amount of pro bono legal service hours to veterans in accordance with rules to be adopted by the Supreme Court.

As proposed, S.B. 2047 amends current law relating to pro bono legal services for veterans and service members and an exemption from the state bar membership fee for attorneys providing those services.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Supreme Court of Texas is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 81.054, Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 81.054, Government Code, by adding Subsection (b-1), as follows:

(b-1) Provides that a member of the state bar who is in good standing is not required to pay an annual membership fee if in the preceding year the member provided the required number of qualifying pro bono legal services to veterans in accordance with rules adopted by the Supreme Court of Texas under this chapter (State Bar). Requires the rules to include standards governing this membership fee exemption, including the number of pro bono hours required for the exemption, the types of pro bono legal services that qualify for the exemption, and the pro bono legal services programs through which the hours may qualify for the exemption.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 434.017(c), Government Code, to require money appropriated under this subsection to be used for certain grants, including grants to provide pro bono legal services to veterans, active duty members of the United States armed forces, and members of the state military forces, administration of the fund, and analysis of certain data. Creates Subdivision (3) from existing text and redesignates former Subdivision (3) as Subdivision (4).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 434.0171, Government Code, to specify that the Texas Veterans Commission is authorized to use the contributions defined under this section for the purposes listed in Section 434.017(c), rather than listed in Section 434.017(c), as redesignated and amended by Chapter 1418 (H.B. 3107), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007.

SECTION 4. (a) Requires the Supreme Court of Texas, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to adopt rules necessary to implement Section 81.054(b-1), Government Code, as added by this Act.

(b) Makes application of Section 81.054(b-1), Government Code, as added by this Act, prospective to January 1, 2020.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2019.