

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R23955 YDB-F

C.S.S.B. 2047
By: Zaffirini
Veteran Affairs & Border Security
4/4/2019
Committee Report (Substituted)

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.

Generally, C.S.S.B. 2047 would:

- Authorize the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to provide a new type of grant, using existing resources, to fund pro bono legal services for veterans and active duty service members; and
- Permit the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services to establish a workgroup to study how best to remove obstacles and increase opportunities for attorneys to provide pro bono legal services to Texas veterans.

This bill would not only increase veterans' access to justice in the present by allowing TVC to provide grants specifically for pro bono services, but also would pave the way for thoughtful, informed future recommendations through an in-depth study of the current state of pro bono services for veterans.

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. (Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 2047 amends current law relating to pro bono legal services for veterans and service members.

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 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 2. 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 3. Amends Section 434.154(a), Government Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services to, by majority vote, establish the following coordinating workgroups to focus on specific issues affecting veterans, servicemembers, and their families:

(1)–(8) makes no changes to these subdivisions;

(9) pro bono legal services for veterans, including opportunities and obstacles for providing those services; and

(10) redesignates existing Subdivision (9) as Subdivision (10) and makes no further changes to this subdivision.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2019.