

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 607
By: Watson et al.
Veteran Affairs & Border Security
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 607 is the Sunset bill for the Texas Veterans' Land Board (VLB).

Texas voters established VLB through a constitutional amendment in 1946 to honor Texas veterans and their families. Housed within the General Land Office (GLO), VLB provides land, home, and home improvement loans; long-term nursing care; and burial and interment services to veterans and their families. As a constitutionally created board, VLB is subject to review, but not abolishment, under the Sunset Act.

S.B. 607 reflects the Sunset Advisory Commission's recommendations, which update the board's sunset provision and requirements related to board member training and policymaking, continue VLB's reporting requirement, and ensure that statute conforms to the person-first respectful language initiative.

As proposed, S.B. 607 amends current law relating to the operations and functions of the Veterans' Land Board and the sunset review date for and programs administered by the board.

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 161.0111, Natural Resources Code, as follows:

Sec. 161.0111. SUNSET PROVISION. Requires the Texas Veterans' Land Board (VLB) to be reviewed during the period in which state agencies abolished in 2031, rather than 2019, are reviewed and every 12th year after that, rather than every 12th year after 2019.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 161, Natural Resources Code, by adding Section 161.0141, as follows:

Sec. 161.0141. SEPARATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES. Requires VLB to develop and implement policies that clearly separate the policy-making responsibilities of VLB and the management responsibilities of the executive secretary, assistant executive secretary, and staff of VLB.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 161.023, Natural Resources Code, by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (d), as follows:

(b) Requires the training program for a person who is appointed to and qualifies for office as a member of VLB to provide the person with information regarding:

(1) the law governing board operations, rather than the legislation that created VLB;

(2) makes no changes to this subdivision;

(3) the scope of and limitations on the rulemaking authority of VLB;

(4) creates this subdivision from existing text and redesignates existing Subdivisions (4)–(5) as Subdivisions (5)–(6);

(5) the requirements of:

(A) laws relating to open meetings, public information, administrative procedure, and disclosure of conflicts of interests; and

(B) other laws applicable to members of a state policy-making body in performing their duties; and

(6) makes no changes to this subdivision.

(d) Requires the commissioner of the Texas General Land Office (land commissioner) to create a training manual that includes the information required by Subsection (b). Requires the land commissioner to distribute a copy of the training manual annually to each member of VLB. Requires each member of VLB, on receipt of the training manual, to sign and submit to the land commissioner a statement acknowledging receipt of the training manual.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 161.031(a), Natural Resources Code, as follows:

(a) Requires the executive secretary or his or her designee to prepare and maintain a written plan to assure implementation of a program of equal employment opportunity whereby all personnel transactions are made without regard to certain characteristics, including disability, rather than handicap.

SECTION 5. (a) Provides that, except as provided by Subsection (b), Section 161.023, Natural Resources Code, as amended by this Act, applies to a member of VLB appointed before, on, or after the effective date of this Act.

(b) Provides that a member of VLB who, before the effective date of this Act, completed the training program required by Section 161.023, Natural Resources Code, as that law existed before the effective date of this Act, is required to complete additional training only on subjects added by this Act to the training program as required by Section 161.023, Natural Resources Code, as amended by this Act. Prohibits a VLB member described by this subsection from voting, deliberating, or being counted as a member in attendance at a meeting of VLB held on or after December 1, 2019, until the member completes the additional training.

SECTION 6. Effective date: September 1, 2019.