

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Brittany Calame](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, April 24, 2018 9:27:11 AM

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From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 24, 2018 8:55 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION TVC

First Name: Les

Last Name: Cooks

Title: Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.)

Organization you are affiliated with: Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas (Past President--2012)

Email:

City: Farmersville

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

ISSUE# 2: Texas Veterans Commission (TVC's) Status Quo Approach to Claims Counseling Does Not Maximize State Resources to Best Serve Veterans.

Key Recommendation #3: Remove military requirements for Veterans County Service Officers to expand the pool of potential accredited claims counselors for Texas Veterans.

Background: The Legislation that established the Veterans County Service Officers Program (434.032(a)(1) stated that the office must be "Separate and Distinct from all other county offices". Veterans bring a "Distinct" set of skills to the position that can't be duplicated anywhere else but through military service. Veterans can bring Empathy to the Position—not just Sympathy. The process of filing a claim for veterans benefits is not a paperwork exercise but a process that entails critical thinking and analytical skills related to the various military services. For instance, combat veterans relate to combat veterans much better than non combat veterans (Combat service can't be faked).

I strongly "OPPOSE" Key Recommendation #3 based on the following reasons:

1. Approval would have a direct impact on Veterans Employment Preference thereby reducing the number of jobs available to the pool of qualified Texas Combat Veterans, Disabled Veterans and Homeless Veterans. Historically, the aforementioned Veterans lag behind regarding employment.
2. Based on information from the The Texas Veterans Commission's website, applicants for Claims Counselor or Employment Representative require military service to be considered for the position which clearly indicates that they (TVC) support Veterans Preference.

3. Some Counties claim that they can't find qualified veterans for Veterans County Service Officers positions. Veterans earn Veterans Employment Preference through their service and sacrifice to our county. That earned preference should "Never" be circumvented by changing laws to accommodate employment selections.

4. The duties of a Veterans County Service Officer listed below includes more than just filing fully developed Service Connected Disability Claims, War-Time Pension Claims and related Appeals:

- a. Veterans Court Representative
- b. Employment/Hiring Fairs
- c. Visiting VA Hospitals, Local Jails and Funeral Homes
- d. Visiting Assisted Living Facilities, Nursing Homes, Retirement Homes, Private Homes and Schools
- e. Participating in Veterans Day Parades
- f. Coordinating and Interacting with local, statewide and national veterans service organizations
- g. Mentoring other Veterans County Service Officers
- h. Developing Annual Budgets and Preparing Comprehensive Reports/Briefings

5. I had the privilege of serving as the Director/Veterans County Service Officer in Hunt County from 2005 to 2010 and Rockwall County from 2010 to 2015. As a disabled veteran with 30 plus years of service (Enlisted and Officer), I was able to be effective and efficient in my position by bringing to bare all of my military experiences. It was an honor to help bring millions of dollars to the Veterans, Surviving Spouses and Dependents of both counties. I still continue to serve veterans as an Accredited VA Claims Agent. Serving other Veterans is an honor and provides therapeutic value and a sense of purpose.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

1. I strongly suggest that counties advertise through the Texas Veterans Commission's website, Work-in-Texas website, Veterans County Service Officers Association of Texas and all other Veteran Service Organizations in Texas which should provide a pool of qualified Veteran applicants.

2. TVC should conduct an online forum (Go to Meeting) that includes current and former Veterans County Service Officers to gather ideas regarding how to fully utilize resources and expand partnerships to better serve our veterans, spouses and dependents.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree