

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Brittany Calame](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Wednesday, April 18, 2018 8:06:19 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 17, 2018 6:03 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION TVC

First Name: Lori

Last Name: Renteria

Title: Austin Tejano Trails

Organization you are affiliated with: ATXVets, Veterans United

Email:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed: I oppose the idea of civilians who have not served in the armed forces being allowed to fill Veterans Service Officers positions. Unless you have gone through the emotional decision to die for your country, putting your sacrifice to protect and defend our constitution and bill of rights above the needs of your family and personal development, you cannot understand nor be as empathetic towards other veterans - especially our veterans who suffer severe and debilitating physical, mental and/or emotional scars during their service. With so many veterans in need of good jobs with supplemental insurance for their loved ones, there is absolutely no reason to not require military service as a strict criteria to even apply for these critical positions. Who would even think this is a good idea? Oh, it's probably the County Commissioners - politicians - who are unhappy with the recent legislation that Veteran Services Offices get to move back to direct reporting to these political Commissioners' Courts where the needs of Vets and their families get heard unfiltered rather than be hidden like ugly step-children in some lowly hierarchy of health, housing, or human services departments. These examples show how uncomfortable people without military experience try to cope with demands for priority funding for veterans' services at all levels of government. As the greatest state in our beloved nation, and with Austin/Travis County being the Capitol and Headquarters of the Texas Veterans Commission - this staff recommendation #2 is shameful and embarrassing. It is disgusting especially when there are so many Texas homeless veterans all over our state who are stuck in temporary shelters; living in cheap apartments/hotels because good ones refuse to accept VASH vouchers; are unable to qualify for housing subsidies because of dishonorable discharges or criminal histories begotten after their military service due to un-useable skills in a tight job market; total loss of income and self-worth upon discharge many times leading to self-medicating their pain with alcohol or drugs; physical traumas or mental health crisis needing long-term and intensive therapy, and are stuck camping in all kinds of secret places to be safe from stranger danger and police harassment. Really super embarrassing in our State Capitol and all over Austin, one of the most affluent cities in America! Staff reporters, if you are a vet and support this recommendation: SHAME! SHAME! SHAME! for not understanding that in our country's more recent conflicts abroad, most of our veterans leave the military poor and broken. Let vets serve vets, we leave no one behind - we've been there and done that!

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: TVC needs to get out of the direct services arena, scale back on the total number of staff, quit spending so much on PR, and become more like it started out - an advocate for state and federal funding and a clearinghouse for info and resources. TVC should be allocating human resources and funding based on the number of sick and poor veterans in the counties or MSAs. Any formula used should be based on arithmetic average income - not median income because a few rich people in a county skews the number of very low-income people. My city, Austin, is the most economically segregated city in the US and East Austin is the fastest gentrifying community as well.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree