



Veterans' Land Board

Staff Contact: *Chloe Lieberknecht*

H.B. 3140 Flynn, et al. (Shapleigh)

Summary

Texas voters established the Veterans' Land Board (VLB) through a constitutional amendment in 1946 to honor Texas veterans and their families by providing loans to purchase land. Today VLB operates within the structure of the General Land Office and provides veterans with three major benefits, including below-market interest rate loans for purchasing raw land, homes, and home improvement projects; long-term care nursing homes for veterans and their families; and veterans cemeteries. VLB administers its three programs with a budget of about \$24 million, derived from investment income, and has a staff of 83.

The Board is subject to Sunset review, but not to abolishment. House Bill 3140 contains the Sunset Commission's recommendations to improve coordination between VLB and Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). The list below summarizes the major provisions of H.B. 3140, and a more detailed discussion follows.

Sunset Provisions

1. Require the Veterans' Land Board and the Texas Veterans Commission to coordinate a statewide approach to making Texas veterans aware of available benefits and services.
2. Require the Veterans' Land Board to obtain and approve relevant audit plans and publicly discuss internal audit reports.

Sunset Provisions

1. Require the Veterans' Land Board and the Texas Veterans Commission to coordinate a statewide approach to making Texas veterans aware of available benefits and services.

Instead of coordinating the operation of one call center, the Legislature modified the Sunset provision to consolidate both VLB's and TVC's call centers at VLB. House Bill 3140 requires VLB to operate the newly consolidated call center, and provides for the transfer of full-time equivalent positions currently performing those duties at TVC, as well as associated appropriations, to the Board. The bill also provides that VLB and TVC must establish a transition plan for the transfer of the call center to VLB. The Legislature further modified this provision to require call center employees to disseminate benefit and service information to veterans.

The bill requires VLB and TVC to cooperatively create a comprehensive brochure that provides information about all available veterans benefits and services. The Legislature modified the Sunset provision to require VLB and TVC to cooperate in integrating web services to make information about veterans benefits easily accessible to all veterans. House Bill 3140 further requires VLB and TVC to jointly plan and present a total benefits package to veterans at all benefits seminars and meetings. Finally, H.B. 3140 requires VLB and TVC to modify their existing Memorandum of Understanding to specify the guidelines necessary to coordinate veterans benefit awareness activities.

2. Require the Veterans' Land Board to obtain and approve relevant audit plans and publicly discuss internal audit reports.

House Bill 3140 requires VLB to review and approve, during public Board meetings, the VLB-related components of the General Land Office's (GLO) internal audit plans. The bill also requires the Board to review and discuss internal audit reports. The GLO Internal Auditor must submit the parts of the audit plan relating to VLB to the Board, as well as report to the Board on the results of audits and follow-up audits that pertain to VLB functions.

Fiscal Implication Summary

House Bill 3140 will not have a fiscal impact to the State. Requiring the Veterans' Land Board to coordinate with the Texas Veterans Commission on outreach efforts, including call centers, databases, direct mail efforts, a joint website and brochure, and joint seminars will result in some administrative savings and efficiencies to both agencies. Any such savings or efficiencies will be allocated to the agencies' marketing outreach and communications functions for the purpose of reaching more veterans.