



Serving the counties of District 2: Fannin, Delta, Hunt, Hopkins, Rains, Rockwall, Kaufman, Van Zandt, and part of Dallas County

Honoring and Serving Our Veterans in Texas

As an veteran myself, I am honored this session to be Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Border Security. Last week in the first meeting of the committee we heard testimony from multiple state agencies about the services that they provide to veterans.

- **Texas Veterans Commission**

The mission of the Texas Veterans Commission is, "To advocate for and provide superior service to veterans that will significantly improve the quality of life for all Texas veterans, their families and survivors." Most veterans' benefits come from the federal government, and one way the Texas Veterans Commission serves our veterans is by obtaining federal benefits and entitlements from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Texas Veterans Commission also assists with education, employment services, and health care advocacy for veterans.

- **Office of Veteran Services**

The mission of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) Office of Veteran Services is to "Coordinate, strengthen, and enhance services for veterans, service members, and their families across state agencies." One of their primary focuses is to prevent our service members, veterans, and their families from ever reaching the crisis point. They have created the Texas Veterans mobile app. This app is available free of charge to Texas veterans, active duty personnel, military families, and service providers. It allows easy access to crisis lines, online resources, personal connections with local veterans, and assistance with accessing services.

- **Veterans Land Board**

The Veterans Land Board is a part of the Texas General Land Office. They offer land, housing, and home improvement loans to qualifying veterans. They also manage Texas State Veterans Homes and Texas State Veterans Cemeteries. A newer program of the Veterans Land Board is the Unaccompanied Veterans Program. This program makes sure that all eligible veterans are now interred with honor and dignity.

This session, I have filed several bills that will go through the Veteran Affairs committee:

- **Texas Border Security and Support Service Ribbon**

Members of the Texas military forces who serve on the Texas border are putting themselves in harm's way, but receive very little recognition. I have filed SB 89 that would create a Texas Border Security and Support Service Ribbon. Members of the state military forces would be eligible to receive the Texas Border Security and Support Service Ribbon if they served on or after July 28, 2014; on state active duty for at least 30 consecutive days; and in support of operations to secure the Texas border.





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- **Agency Sunset Bills**

I have had the honor of serving on the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission since last year. This commission reviews state agencies and determines if they should continue to exist and, if so, how they can operate more efficiently. Because of my position on the Sunset Commission, I will be carrying six Sunset bills in the Senate. Two will be Senate bills and four will originate in the House. Two will be going through the Veteran Affairs Committee. These bills propose the continuation and changes to the Texas Veterans Commission (SB 601) and the Texas Military Department (SB 602).

The main provisions of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) bill would continue TVC for 12 years; require TVC to annually create, set priorities for, and evaluate meaningful outcome measures for all its programs; require TVC to track, evaluate, and strategically adjust claims staffing and special teams, and better track and analyze claims outcome data to guide program success; and requires TVC's executive director to create a training manual for commission members. The Texas Military Department bill would continue the Texas Military Department for 12 years and clarify the adjutant general has responsibility over all aspects of the department and strengthen internal oversight of state administration.

As a veteran, I am keenly aware of many of the issues facing our veterans, and as vice-chair of the Veteran Affairs and Border Security Committee I will be monitoring bills closely to make sure veterans are receiving the care and benefits they have earned. If you ever experience difficulty with your veterans benefits, or simply do not know who to contact, please reach out to my office. My staff will be happy to point you in the right direction to get the help you need.

