

Senate Bills of Interest - Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services

Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 54	Nelson	The bill mandates TANF applicants to submit to drug testing and excludes any persons with positive test results from receiving benefits for 6 months, for 12 months if a second positive result, and permanently for a third positive result. The bill does make an allowance for a child in the care of a person testing positive to continue to receive financial assistance through another adult deemed appropriate and passing a drug test as well. The bill also mandates the reporting to CPS the results of any test indicating a parent's drug use. Note that when this bill was introduced last session (SB11) it was widely challenged as unconstitutional.	The bill will deter local parents from receiving benefits for which their families may be eligible to avoid being tested or to avoid having another adult named the "protective payee" to receive the TANF benefits on their behalf. Mandating that positive results of a drug test be reported to CPS will result in increased local investigation and removals by CPS and therefore more children in foster care locally. The effect of deterring otherwise eligible persons from applying for TANF will put greater strain on the local safety net, as state funds will not be utilized to provide financial assistance to eligible families. State-funded CPS services are supplemented with some local funding, but more information is needed to determine the scope of local fiscal impact on an increase in removals and in foster care placements.	<i>01/26/2015 S Referred to Health & Human Services</i>
SB 55	Nelson	The bill creates a grant program for community services and treatment for veterans with mental illness. The program will receive legislative appropriation but the will be designed and administered through contract with a private entity which	If the program serves local veterans, then the county will benefit from the program. The bill does not appear to pose any fiscal impact locally, other than a positive one should local vets enjoy increased capacity and availability of mental health services tailored for their particular needs.	<i>05/11/2015 H Committee report sent to Calendars</i>

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		will match grant funds.		
CSSB 62	Huffines	The bill orders the State Comptroller to report to the Speaker of the House, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor and the Attorney General the total biennial costs incurred by unlawfully present persons by the State. Reporting categories must include education, health care, and incarceration costs. The Comptroller and the Attorney General will report these costs to the federal government and seek complete reimbursement for said costs “by every means available” including withholding state payments to the federal government. Any reimbursement received will be deposited in the general revenue fund.	<p>Should the federal reimbursement to the state general fund will be returned to local communities, this bill could benefit Travis County. If the new program that is to replace S-Comm (PEP) is implemented, costs of detentions should be reduced. However, it is unknown when PEP will be implemented and how it will affect local booking and detention of unlawfully present persons. As for education and healthcare costs borne by the state for unlawfully present persons, it is unclear how these costs would be itemized and calculated on a local level and if reimbursement to localities is even possible.</p> <p>The Texas Commission on Jail Standards reports that Travis County spent \$29.5 M on housing immigrants on federal detainees from 10/11 through 6/14. Daily costs in Travis County exceed \$106 per immigrant on federal detainee. The bill –if implemented –could return these costs to the County. Again, because education is state-funded and healthcare costs for unlawfully present individuals are hard to track and fall across several funding streams, with the exception of indigent care programs, it is difficult to gauge what the fiscal impact would be for Travis County outside of the incarceration expenses.</p>	<i>05/08/2015 H Received from the Senate</i>
SB 68	Ellis	The bill grants authority to counties to set a minimum wage.	The bill would allow the Court to raise the minimum wage for work performed within County geography and would require employers operating therein to pay the greater of the federal or county minimum wage. The bill could raise income for Travis County residents. The bill could raise income for Travis County residents but could prove a deterrent for some employers who prefer to pay lower wages.	<i>01/26/2015 S Referred to Natural Resources & Economic Development</i>

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SB 89	Ellis	This bill would expand Medicaid eligibility up to 138% of the federal poverty level. (Note that Medicaid expansion per the ACA is fully federally funded for the initial three years of implementation. After that, the federal share gradually falls to 90% by 2020.)	<p>According to the 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, nearly 69,000 Travis County adults between the ages of 18 and 64 are currently uninsured and would be eligible for Medicaid if it were expanded per the ACA threshold. This expansion would provide access to needed physical and behavioral healthcare for vulnerable Travis County residents, many of whom are currently delaying care and/or seeking care in high-cost environments, such as emergency rooms. Similar to HB 116.</p> <p>Medicaid expansion will bring jobs and revenue into the state and its communities, including Travis County. Fewer local tax dollars will have to be allocated for indigent care programs and uncompensated care as eligible persons gain insurance and access to preventive care, decreasing inappropriate use of emergent care. At the state level, it is estimated that Medicaid expansion could result in \$1.7 billion in uncompensated care savings from 2013 to 2022. Local uncompensated care cost savings are unknown but will be a reality if Medicaid is expanded. In addition, hospitals are having their DSH funding cut per the ACA. In states such as Texas which have not expanded Medicaid, hospitals are losing substantial revenue and Medicaid expansion will restore some of this critical funding to care for the uninsured. Texas hospitals are expected to lose more than 20% of their federal DSH allocation between 2017 and 2024. Local hospital losses under the ACA DSHs cuts are unknown, but will be substantial.</p>	<i>01/26/2015 S Referred to Health & Human Services</i>
SB 123	West	The bill grants authority to counties to set a minimum wage.	Seems to be identical to SB 68	<i>01/27/2015 S Referred to Natural Resources & Economic Development</i>
SB 160	Johnson	Makes an exception to existing law to allow an investigating officer to inquire as to the nationality or immigration status of a victim of or witness to a crime only if the officer deems said inquiry necessary to	The bill seeks to encourage immigrant communities to cooperate with law enforcement in their crime investigations.	<i>01/27/2015 S Referred to s/c on Border Security by Pres</i>

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		investigate the offense or provide the victim or witness with information about crime victim visa options. Companion to HB 154		
SB 169	Uresti	The bill allows Texas residents on active military duty, as well as their spouses and children, to maintain their position on public benefit waiting lists while they temporarily reside out of state for up to one year after death or active duty ends.	Veterans who are Travis County residents will avoid losing their wait list positions for public benefits due to a temporary period of living out of state. Because Travis County veteran residents will not lose their wait list position, they may enjoy greater access to public benefits for which they and their families are eligible for. This will increase the income of these individuals and families and could lead to improved outcomes for veterans and their families affected by this bill. Companion is HB 765.	<i>05/01/2015 H Committee report sent to Calendars</i>
SB 174	Huffman	The bill makes unlawfully present immigrants ineligible for community supervision, including deferred adjudication community supervision.	Unlawfully present immigrants convicted of crimes in Travis County would have longer terms of confinement in county jails or longer probation terms under the bill. Without current data on the number of immigrants unlawfully present who are convicted of crimes, it is not possible to estimate the fiscal impact of this bill - though there certainly would be one. The cost of detention for one day in the county jail has been estimated at \$106. Furthermore, if unlawfully present immigrants are eligible for community supervision, they are able to resume caring for and providing for their families rather than draining public resources in county jail.	<i>01/27/2015 S Referred to Criminal Justice</i>
SB 185	Perry	This bill prohibits local government sanctuary city policies and requires local governments that fail to enforce federal immigration laws to forfeit federal funding.	There has been support for sanctuary city policies among Travis County residents and some local officials, while law enforcement officials in some communities have stated that enforcement of federal immigration law is beyond the scope of local agencies and would require the expenditure of substantial local resources. If this bill became law, any federal funds received by the County or by surrounding counties would be withheld, resulting in revenue loss, placing strain on public services and/or infrastructure. Local law enforcement will be prohibited from adopting sanctuary policies, which is not to require them to report and otherwise cooperate with federal immigration law, but it will remove some	<i>05/12/2015 S Placed on intent calendar</i>

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			<p>aspect of local control in setting policy in this area.</p> <p>Travis County sheriff's deputies are not required to notify federal immigration officials and will not call them except in suspected human trafficking or terrorism cases. Deputies can ask about or seek proof of a person's immigration status if the person is in custody or a suspect in a criminal investigation for a non-immigration criminal violation and the person's immigration status is considered pertinent to the investigation.</p> <p>Austin Police Department policy instructs officers to cooperate with federal authorities in identifying and targeting criminally active and violent undocumented gang members.</p> <p>Travis County Jail corrections officers ask incoming inmates where they were born on booking sheets because some consulates require that they be notified if a citizen of their country is arrested.</p> <p>The fiscal note on the version of this bill that was introduced in 82R (HB 12) states that fiscal impact for local law enforcement agencies will be determined by their level of compliance regarding federal immigration law at the time of implementation of the law. If they are not compliant, they forfeit their federal grants. The fiscal impact for local police departments could be substantial and could involve expenditures related to identification technology, increased staffing, and additional jail beds.</p>	
SB 194	Ellis	Mandates that health insurance companies provide coverage for tests and procedures to determine HIV infection status, regardless of whether the test or medical procedure is related to the reason for a patient's visit.	There is a growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Travis County. Insurance coverage for HIV testing will benefit prevention efforts. This bill will not have a direct fiscal impact on Travis County. However, prevention of the spread of the virus will help contain public funds allocated to local clinics and social service agencies - some of whom receive County funding -providing services to those affected by HIV/AIDS.	1/27/15 referred to HHS
SB 267	Perry	Blocks cities and counties from enacting source of income discrimination ordinances which are	Many American cities have such ordinances in effect which increase access to housing options for the working poor, veterans, seniors and disabled populations. Currently, landlords can refuse to accept Section 8 renters. According to a 2012 Austin Tenant's Council survey, less than 10% of Austin Area	05/08/2015 H Reported favorably w/o amendment(s)

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		designed to give low-income renters more housing options.	landlords are said to currently accept Section 8 vouchers. Without income discrimination ordinances, Section 8 programming can't be fully implemented. With Austin's rising rents and high occupancy rates, Section 8 housing is a critical resource for low-income families and is intended to allow eligible families to live in "high opportunity" areas. In December 2014, Austin City Council unanimously passed an ordinance that bans discrimination based on a renter's source of income. The ordinance is being challenged in Travis County District Court. The bill will block local ordinances which give low-income renters more housing options, including housing options in more densely populated and well-connected (via public transportation) parts of the County. This can stifle economic well-being for low-income families and individuals, restricting employment options and making transportation to school and child care difficult. HB 738 is a companion.	
SB 343	Huffines	Prohibits local governments from passing rules, ordinances or regulations not in conformity with state statutes or rules on the same subject. Also prohibits local governments from implementing ordinances, rules or regulations that conflict with or are more stringent than state statute or rules.	A "pre-emption law", as is being proposed and passed in many other states to limit municipalities and counties from taking a variety of actions, including, for example, raising the minimum wage and regulating landlords potentially in receipt of section 8 vouchers.	02/02/2015 S Referred to State Affairs
SB 375	Rodriguez	The bill excludes incarcerated persons (>90 days of incarceration) from the standard used to calculate child support for persons lacking evidence of income or resources (minimum wage at 40 hours/week).	There is no direct impact on TC, but excluding fathers from wage and salary presumption will mean less revenue for affected local mothers and their children who may have to rely more heavily on the local safety net. Housing and basic needs assistance may be in greater demand.	S Referred to State Affairs 2/2/15

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SB 470	Rodriguez	The bill seeks to make federal law banning persons convicted of felony drug offenses from receiving public benefits inapplicable to SNAP eligibility determination. Companion is HB 840.	Less restrictions on SNAP receipt means fewer local dollars will be in demand for basic needs assistance. No direct fiscal impact to the County but wider access to SNAP benefits means fewer County resources (and community partners' resources) will need to be allocated to food pantries and other forms of basic needs assistance.	<i>Filed 2/6/15</i>
SB 472	Rodriguez	Requires each state agency with more than 100 full time employees to designate one employee to who will stand informed on trends/developments around hiring veterans, recruit veterans to fill open positions within the agency, and to serve as a contact both inside and outside of the agency for information on employment services available. Identical to HB 1457 .	This bill will have a positive impact on Travis County veterans by growing their employment potential and therefore earning potential. However, data from the American Community Survey suggests that Travis County veterans have a higher rate of labor force participation than civilians; potential unintended negative impact upon employment potential for other special populations unknown.	<i>Referred to Veteran Affairs & Military Installations 2/10/2015</i>
SB 508	Rodriguez	The bill mandates that all state agencies give hiring preference (and preference in awarding contracts?) to Veterans and maintain a 20% minimum quota of Veteran employees. Similar to HB 754	May improve outcomes for Veterans and their families via expanded employment opportunities. Particularly considering that many state agency openings are located in Travis County. May have unintended negative impact on other populations. Bill has no direct fiscal impact to the County.	<i>Filed 2/10/15</i>

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SB 660	Rodriguez	Bill mandates that regional coordinators are established within the Veteran Entrepreneur program in major centers of economic growth to support veteran business owners and entrepreneurs. Mandates that the program coordinate with US Veterans Affairs and US Small Business Administration to eliminate and prevent duplication of effort regarding these services.	Assuming Austin/Travis County is indicated as a center of major economic growth in the State, there could be improved coordination and capacity of services to support veteran-owned businesses and veteran entrepreneurs.	<i>05/11/2015 S Reported enrolled</i>
SB 722	Burkett	The bill excludes any person applying for unemployment benefits from receiving them should they refuse to take a drug test required prior to beginning a job for which a drug test is required.	There may be a marginal decrease in the number of unemployed persons drawing unemployment benefits. This will adversely affect individuals and families in the County, decreasing incomes and in many cases, family stability. Companion is SB 722.	<i>05/08/2015 H Received from the Senate</i>
CSSB 723	Perry	The bill extends TANF work and parenting skills training requirements to parents of children receiving benefits (who themselves do not receive benefits).	Non recipient parents who are not compliant and lose benefits will create deeper financial insecurity for children who are eligible for TANF assistance. This will place a greater burden on local safety net services. Children will also suffer poor outcomes related to financial vulnerability, such as lower educational attainment levels, poor health outcomes and involvement in high-cost systems at County taxpayer expense.	<i>05/11/2015 H Referred to Human Services: May 11 2015 9:47PM</i>
SB 832	Campbell	Coordinates work groups of the Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran's services. Allows council to establish by majority vote workgroups that focus on specific	If the groups work products yield better services for veterans in Travis County it may mean that the county will be able to allocate fewer resources to meet unmet needs in the veteran and service member population. However, fiscal impact is unknown.	<i>05/08/2015 H Comm. report sent to Local & Consent Calendar</i>

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		issues of veterans, service members, and their families. Issues include but are not limited to: health, gender, employment, criminal justice, housing.		
SB 838	Lucio	Bill moves the Office of Immigration and Refugee Services into HHSC, mandates that it will secure maximum federal grants related to immigrant and refugee concerns, coordinate with Mexican authorities to reduce illegal immigration, seek federal reimbursement for services provided and allow for local input and considerations around immigration and refugee issues.	Local impact unknown but interesting to monitor rulemaking governing the solicitation of community input and to track impact on outcomes for affected populations. Companion is HB 2661.	<i>05/12/2015 S Placed on intent calendar</i>
SB 1049	Campbell	Amends tax code to exempt new vet owned businesses from franchise taxes for up to 5 years	Encourages veterans to create businesses by relieving them of franchise tax burden. Franchise taxes based upon net worth of tax payer; may have unintended negative consequences upon state revenue streams depending on uptake. Companion is HB 2111.	<i>05/05/2015 H Referred to Ways & Means: May 5 2015 5:28PM</i>
CSSB 1580	Garcia	This bill directs the Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Veterans' Commission, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Texas Homeless Education Office to conduct a study on homeless youth and homeless veterans, including data collection on demographics, needs assessment, service gap analysis, and funding sources.	Comprehensive study of this population may improve services for affected persons. Homeless veterans have traditionally been high cost drivers of EMS, ER and jail expenditures. Veterans that served and are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from TBI and other physical and behavioral effects of IEDs may have needs perhaps not sufficiently addressed in existing service environments. Companion is HB 4013. CS removes "Youth" as a focus of the study.	<i>05/05/2015 S Placed on intent calendar</i>

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CSSB 1928	Seigler	Directs the Executive Commissioner of HHSC to adopt rules for collecting and considering community input on how localities are currently required to report refugee resettlement distribution to the US Refugee Resettlement Program at the state level.	No direct, immediate local impact but the codification of the importance of community input is something to watch. Also of interest due to changes in immigration policy and the politics concerning those changes.	<i>05/05/2015 H Received from the Senate</i>
SJR 16	Campbell	<p>The bill proposes an amendment to the constitution that would nullify the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act. The mandate requires most everyone to carry health insurance or face a penalty. The bill would cause anyone enrolling in health insurance or providing it to their employees just to comply with the ACA to drop their policy or policies and for some gains in health coverage to be reversed.</p> <p>Subsection b asserts that no state agency or official may enforce any penalty or sanction regarding the individual mandate, but the penalties written into the ACA will be operationalized as taxes which puts enforcement activities already beyond state jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The bill will reverse some of the gains in local health insurance coverage resulting from the ACA. Uninsured populations do not have regular access to healthcare and use expensive, non-preventative forms of care and generally have poorer health outcomes.</p> <p>While the bill would nullify any penalties (paid as taxes) levied on individuals or employers not in compliance with the individual mandate, these "savings" will not come close to offsetting the costs of caring for the uninsured in our clinics and hospitals which use local tax revenue to pay for this care.</p>	<i>2/2/15 referred to Business and Commerce</i>