OLR Bill Analysis
SB 778

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A GREEN ALERT SYSTEM FOR MISSING VETERANS.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), within available appropriations, to establish and administer a “Green Alert” communication network to help state and local law enforcement find missing veterans. It also requires DESPP’s missing person clearinghouse (see BACKGROUND), after receiving a missing person report, to assist in locating the missing veteran. (It is unclear whether the bill contemplates a separate communication network for missing veterans in addition to the existing clearinghouse.)

As is already the case for missing children, persons age 65 and older, and adults with mental impairment, the bill requires a municipal police department that receives a report of a missing veteran to (1) immediately accept such report for filing, (2) inform all on-duty police officers of the missing veteran report, and (3) communicate the report to other appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Under the bill, a missing veteran is any person who served in the armed forces who is reported to or identified by a law enforcement agency as a missing person. The armed forces means the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force, or any reserve component, including the National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2019

MISSING PERSONS CLEARINGHOUSE

Under the bill, the missing veteran’s relative, legal or healthcare
representative, nursing home administrator, or certified Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services police officers must file a DESPP missing person report with the state’s missing persons clearinghouse.

As under current law, the bill requires the clearinghouse, once it receives the missing person report to collect, process, maintain, and disseminate information to assist in locating the missing veteran.

Under the bill, the person submitting the missing person report must (1) attest under penalty of perjury that the missing person is a veteran and (2) notify the clearinghouse or law enforcement agency if the missing person is found.

GREEN ALERT COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Minimum Standards

The bill requires DESPP, in consultation with the Veterans Affairs and Military departments, to adopt regulations establishing minimum standards for issuing and disseminating alerts through the network.

The minimum standards must provide that:

1. appropriate information on a missing veteran’s special needs, including health care needs, are disseminated to the appropriate state or local law enforcement agency;

2. an alert’s dissemination be limited to the geographic areas that the missing veteran could reasonably reach, considering the veteran’s circumstances and physical and mental conditions, the available modes of transportation, and the circumstances of the disappearance;

3. alerts comply with all applicable federal, state, and local privacy laws and regulations; and

4. civil liberties and sensitive medical information of missing veterans are protected.

DESPP Coordinator
Under the bill, DESPP must designate an employee to act as the Green Alert communications network coordinator. The coordinator must develop proposed protocols to recover missing veterans and reduce the number of veterans who are reported missing. (Presumably, this means reducing the number of veterans who go missing.)

The bill requires the coordinator to also develop protocols needed for procedures from the time a law enforcement agency is initially notified that the veteran is missing to the time the veteran is returned to his or her family or conservator.

By October 1, 2020, and annually thereafter, the coordinator must submit a report to the Veterans’ Affairs and Public Safety and Security committees on:

1. his or her activities as coordinator,
2. the number of Green Alerts issued,
3. the number of individuals located,
4. the average period of time between an alert being issued and locating the individual, and
5. any other information the coordinator deems important.

BACKGROUND

Silver and Amber Alerts

The clearinghouse uses an emergency notification system to disseminate information on people reported missing. The system issues local, regional, or statewide alerts on radio, television, and electronic highway signs. It issues (1) Silver Alerts for missing people age 65 or older or at least age 18 with a mental impairment and (2) Amber Alerts for missing children.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee
Joint Favorable
Yea 16 Nay 0 (03/12/2019)