

State Legislative Report: Other Issues for 2019 Legislative Session

Another issue that could possibly revive is the defense of the Hazlewood Act. Although we currently do not expect any issues coming up this session, Jim Brennan reported the following:

Brennan discussed TCVO defense of the Hazlewood Act. The current law provides up to 150 hours of free college credit hours for veterans who declared Texas as the home of record at the time that they entered the service. These hours are currently transferable to the spouses and dependents of these qualified Texas Veterans. The Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) were directed during the 85th Texas Legislature to produce a study on the financial impact of Hazlewood on their budgets. These IHE members are the major public university systems within Texas. The requested study and analysis have not been generated by IHE. If and when there is a challenge, TCVO is prepared to work with IHE to protect Hazlewood benefits. Rep Chris Turner chairs the Higher Education Committee, knows TCVO, and has worked with TCVO in the past on several other issues.

In our meeting February 15/16, we will discuss what to promote at the March Advocating in Austin. Obviously, one of our primary issues will be that of disabled veteran exemption. Secondary issues may be those of increasing the number of veteran courts which could be enhanced with shared county veterans' courts and increased support for County Veteran Service Officers (VSO). These are both major issues in counties without a VSO or limited resources to support the county's Veteran population. The continuing education for VSO's is critical to ensure that they are current in the procedures and policies required to keep them on top of their jobs.

Our impact on the development and successful passage of legislation requires that we may need to have a lot of representation from the veteran organizations, including the TCC and its members, at the various committee hearings. Many instances will be a short notice request for assistance! TCVO member John Spahr, former State of Texas VFW Chairman, has developed an email database referred to as the VFW Team Texas Alerts. There are over 500 names on the Alert email list. The list is for legislative issues only and is designed to garner grassroots support for Veteran related legislation. Spahr has opened the VFW Team Texas Alerts to any Veteran Service Organization that wishes to be added to the alert network. I recommend that our MOAA Chapter Presidents and Legislative Chairs share their information with John to be part of this alert system.

Jim Cunningham, TCC State Legislative VP

