

## Committee on Regulated Industries

### **CS/CS/HB 615 — Professional Regulation**

by Government Operations and Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; Careers and Competition Subcommittee; and Rep. Renner and others (CS/CS/SB 1272 by Appropriations Committee; Regulated Industries Committee; and Senators Brandes and Stargel)

The bill creates the “Occupational Opportunity Act,” which grants new and expands existing exemptions from professional licensure application and renewal requirements by certain boards and programs in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) for current and former active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces and certain spouses and surviving spouses of such members.

Eligible spouses and surviving spouses in good standing with a DBPR board or program who are absent from the state due to the active duty member’s duties with the Armed Forces are exempted from licensure renewal provisions. The period of time active duty members remain in good standing after discharge from active duty is expanded from six months to two years.

The DBPR is required to issue a professional license to an applicant who holds a valid professional license issued by another state or jurisdiction and is or was an active duty member of the Armed Forces, is the spouse of an active duty member, or is the surviving spouse of a member who died while on active duty. An applicant who was an active duty member must have received an honorable discharge from the Armed Forces. The bill specifies additional application requirements for such licensure including fingerprints for state and federal criminal history checks and compliance with any insurance or bonding requirements. Renewal of such licenses requires the licensee to meet the same conditions required for all licensees under the applicable practice act, including continuing education requirements.

Additionally, the bill requires the DBPR, or the appropriate board, to waive the initial licensure fee for applicants who are active duty members of the Armed Forces, certain spouses and surviving spouses of active duty members, and low-income individuals.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2017.

*Vote: Senate 36-0; House 118-0*