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**State Government Committee**

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**SJM 8040**

**Brief Description:** Requesting funding for veterans' health care needs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shin, Jacobsen, Kastama, Thibaudeau, Berkey, Fraser, Doumit, Prentice, Horn, Kohl-Welles, Kline, Fairley, Oke, Stevens, Hale, Zarelli, T. Sheldon, B. Sheldon, Schmidt, McAuliffe, Keiser, Murray, Spanel, Brown, Eide, Rasmussen, Winsley and Benton.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Petitions the President of the United States, the Congress of the United States, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to serve adequately the current and future demands of our state's veterans and to affirm the debt owed these veterans.

**Hearing Date:** 2/26/04

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

**Background:**

In June 2002, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the second phase of Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) project was underway. This process was designed as a way to identify the health care needs of veterans over the next 20 years and, once completed, will give VA a national plan for directing resources where they are most needed.

The VA concluded that it could enhance veterans health care benefits if it reduced the level of resources spent on underused, inefficient, or obsolete buildings and reinvested these savings to provide health care more efficiently in modern facilities at existing locations or new locations closer to where the veterans live.

The veteran population in Washington numbers about 670,000. The number of veterans receiving health care through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs ranks second to last among the states. The network for veterans' service provision that includes Washington has the largest number of veterans waiting for non-emergent clinic visits. Increasingly numbers of Washington State veterans who had previously had other arrangements for their health care must for the first time now turn to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for their primary health care. The VA has not fully considered the current and future need for veterans' health care through the CARES project.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington petition President Bush, the Congress of the United States, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to serve adequately the current and future demands of our state's veterans and to affirm the debt owed these veterans.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.