

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5691

As Passed House:
March 13, 2014

Title: An act relating to veterans' homes.

Brief Description: Concerning veterans' homes.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hewitt, Conway and Rolfes).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 2/20/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/13/14, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the Walla Walla Veterans' Home as a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home.
- Allows admission to the state veterans' homes for parents whose children died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.
- Removes the indigency eligibility requirement for admission to the state veterans' homes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Sawyer, Vice Chair; Holy, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Robinson, Santos and Young.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The State Constitution mandates that the Legislature provide a soldiers' home for honorably discharged resident soldiers, sailors, and marines who were disabled in the line of duty. In 1890 the Legislature created the Washington Soldiers' Home in Orting. In 1907 the Legislature established a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home in Retsil, called the Washington Veterans' Home. In 2001 the Legislature established another branch in Spokane, called the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home.

The Washington Soldiers' Home, the Washington Veterans' Home, and the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home (collectively the state veterans' homes) are managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (Department). The Department must provide maintenance to residents, including room and board, medical, dental, domiciliary and nursing care, physical and occupational therapy, and recreational activities.

Certain qualifying veterans are eligible for admission to the state veterans' homes if they are state residents, indigent, and unable to support themselves or their families. Spouses and domestic partners of qualifying veterans also are eligible for admission, as well as spouses and domestic partners of veterans who died if the deceased spouse or partner was a resident or eligible for admission at the time of death, or if the spouse or partner has become indigent since the veteran's death. Spouses or domestic partners of deceased service members must be at least 50 years old and must have had been married to the service member for three years to be eligible for admission.

Summary of Bill:

The Walla Walla Veterans' Home is established as a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home. Applicants do not have to be indigent to be eligible for admission in the state veterans' homes. Parents whose children died while serving in the Armed Forces are eligible for admission to the state veterans' homes. The eligibility requirement is removed that spouses or domestic partners of deceased service members must be at least 50 years old and must have been married to the service member for three years.

The Department may provide domiciliary and nursing care at the state veterans' homes, but it is not mandated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is the same as a couple of other bills heard in this committee and provides the same policy interests.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Heidi Audette, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.