

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1104

*As Reported By House Committee on:
State Government*

Title: An act relating to merchant marine veterans.

Brief Description: Providing merchant marines with veteran status.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Jones, R. King, Edmondson, Jacobsen, Dellwo, Ferguson, Kremen, Zellinsky, Basich, Paris, Chandler and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 15, 1991, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
STATE GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Pruitt, Vice Chair; McLean, Ranking Minority Member; Bowman, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler; Grant; Moyer; O'Brien; and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda May (786-7135).

Background: In 1988, the United States granted federal veteran status to members of the U.S. Merchant Marine who served in World War II. Currently, members of the Merchant Marine are not officially recognized as veterans by the state of Washington.

A number of benefits are available to groups recognized by the state as veterans. Veterans meeting certain conditions may receive up to five years' service credit in the calculation of their retirement benefits. The conditions veterans must meet to claim these years of service credit vary from state retirement system to system. Veterans and their families in need or the families of deceased veterans in need can receive aid from the Veterans' Assistance Fund. This fund is raised and administered at the county level. In addition, disabled veterans may receive special vehicle licenses at no charge, free state hunting and fishing licenses, and free admission to and free use of campsites in any state park.

Summary of Bill: Members of the Merchant Marine are officially recognized as veterans by the state of Washington. Merchant Marine veterans are eligible to receive any state veteran benefits for which they qualify.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The federal government and several other states have granted veteran status to members of the Merchant Marine. Merchant Marines did serve in combat, were taken as prisoners of war, and were wounded or killed in the line of duty. Their not having veteran status is a serious injustice. The act is not expected to have a major fiscal impact.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Evan Jones; Harold Schmidt and James Colamarino, American Merchant Marines Veterans Association; Keith Sherman, WA Veterans Legislation Coalition (all in favor); and Charles Langen, Office of State Actuary (fiscal impacts).