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HOUSE BILL 2095

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State of Washington

52nd Legislature

1991 Regular Session

By Representatives R. Johnson, McLean, Anderson, Jones, Kremen, Braddock, Valle, Wineberry, Franklin, Day, Pruitt, Rayburn, Roland, Spanel and Prentice; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Read first time February 22, 1991. Referred to Committee on State Government\Appropriations.

1 AN ACT Relating to counseling veterans and their dependents; adding  
2 new sections to chapter 43.60A RCW; creating a new section; making  
3 appropriations; and declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that over fifteen  
6 percent of the troops deployed in the Middle East war, operation  
7 dessert storm, are members of reserve and national guard units. Of the  
8 reservists and national guard members currently on active duty, over  
9 three thousand seven hundred are from Washington state. Further, the  
10 legislature finds that a significant percentage of individuals exposed  
11 to armed conflict during our nation's wars, and their families, suffer  
12 long-term psychological and social disorders that require professional  
13 assistance to permit them to return to normal, productive lives.  
14 Additionally, the legislature finds that over the years the state's  
15 department of veterans affairs has developed a large body of knowledge

1 and professional expertise in treating persons exposed to war stress  
2 and combat-related disorders, including post traumatic stress disorder  
3 also known as PTSD.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The department of veterans affairs, to  
5 the extent funds are made available, shall: (1) Contract with  
6 professional counseling specialists to provide a range of direct  
7 treatment services to war-affected state veterans and to those national  
8 guard and reservists who served in the Middle East, and their family  
9 members; (2) provide treatment services to Washington state Vietnam  
10 veterans for post traumatic stress disorder, particularly for those  
11 veterans whose post traumatic stress disorder has intensified or  
12 initially emerged due to the war in the Middle East; (3) provide an  
13 educational program designed to train primary care professionals, such  
14 as mental health professionals, about the effects of war-related stress  
15 and trauma; (4) provide informational and counseling services for the  
16 purpose of establishing and fostering peer-support networks throughout  
17 the state for families of deployed members of the reserves and the  
18 Washington national guard; (5) provide for veterans' families, a  
19 referral network of community mental health providers who are skilled  
20 in treating deployment stress, combat stress, and post traumatic  
21 stress.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department shall coordinate the  
23 programs contained in section 2 of this act with the services offered  
24 by the department of social and health services, local mental health  
25 organizations, and the federal department of veterans affairs to  
26 minimize duplication. Programs and activities contained in section 2  
27 (3) and (4) of this act, shall conclude thirty days after cessation of  
28 the war in the Middle East.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 4.**        The department of veterans affairs shall  
2 give priority in its counseling and instructional programs to treating  
3 state veterans located in rural areas of the state, especially those  
4 who are members of traditionally underserved minority groups, and women  
5 veterans.

6        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 5.**        The department of veterans affairs shall  
7 design its post traumatic stress disorder and combat stress programs  
8 and related activities to provide veterans with as much privacy and  
9 confidentiality as possible and yet consistent with sound program  
10 management.

11       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 6.**        Sections 2 through 5 of this act are  
12 each added to chapter 43.60A RCW.

13       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 7.**        The sum of:  
14        (1) Ninety thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be  
15 necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 1991; and  
16        (2) Three hundred thousand dollars or as much thereof as may be  
17 necessary, is appropriated for the biennium ending June 30, 1993;  
18 from the general fund to the department of veterans affairs for the  
19 purposes of this act.

20       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 8.**        This act is necessary for the immediate  
21 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the  
22 state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take  
23 effect immediately.