

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5966

C 3 L 93 E1

SYNOPSIS AS ENACTED

Brief Description: Concerning the state veterans' homes.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Rinehart, Haugen and M. Rasmussen; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Veterans Affairs operates two state facilities which provide long-term care for veterans and their spouses: the Soldier's Home at Orting, which has approximately 175 residents; and the Veterans' Home at Retsil, which has 325 residents. Both homes are presently funded with a combination of state general funds, payments from the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, and contributions from the residents' incomes.

Approximately two-thirds of the residents of these homes would be eligible for Medicaid payments if the homes were certified as nursing homes. Both Governor Lowry's budget proposal, and the 1993-95 budget passed by the Senate, assume that parts of both homes will be Medicaid certified by July 1, 1993. This will save about \$6.5 million of state general funds in 1993-95, through replacement with federal Medicaid payments.

Residents of the two homes are able to retain about \$180 of their monthly income for personal use. All income in excess of \$180 is deposited into a revolving fund, for use on purposes the home's superintendent and resident council determine will benefit the residents.

Under state and federal Medicaid rules, all of a nursing home resident's income in excess of a defined personal needs allowance must be used to offset the cost of his or her nursing home care. Under state and federal regulations, the personal needs allowance is \$90 per month for veterans and about \$43 per month for all other residents in private nursing homes. The Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs are attempting to obtain clarification from the federal government regarding which amount would apply for a veteran in a state-operated veterans' facility.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Veterans Affairs is authorized to operate nursing care units at the two veterans' homes as Medicaid nursing homes, under contract with the Department of Social and Health Services. Statutory language regarding eligibility for residence in the homes is clarified.

The Department of Social and Health Services and the Department of Veterans Affairs are to seek federal approval to set the personal needs allowance for nursing care residents at \$160 per month. If approval is not granted, the allowance for nursing care residents is \$90.

There is to be an elected residents council at each home to advise the director of Veterans Affairs on all aspects of the home's operation. The council must approve expenditures from the home's benefit fund.

VOTES ON FINAL PASSAGE:

Senate	36	9	
House	94	0	(House amended)
Senate			(Senate refused to concur)
House	98	0	(House amended)

First Special Session

Senate	38	8
House	96	1

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 1993