

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1654

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to veterans.

Brief Description: Revising definition of veteran.

Sponsors: Representatives Kessler and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/17/99, 3/2/99 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/16/99, 95-0.

Passed Senate: 4/7/99, 43-0.

Passed Legislature.

<h3>Brief Summary of Bill</h3>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Revises the definition of a WWII veteran to be consistent with the federal definition. |
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives McMorris, Republican Co-Chair; Romero, Democratic Co-Chair; Campbell, Republican Vice Chair; Miloscia, Democratic Vice Chair; Dunshee; Haigh; Lambert and D. Schmidt.

Staff: Scott MacColl (786-7106).

Background:

A veteran is defined as having served during a war or in the direct theater of armed conflict. A war is described as WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, and any future war as determined by Congress. A direct theater of armed conflict is described as the crisis in Lebanon, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and others.

WWII merchant marines and U.S. army transport and naval transportation service vessel veterans are defined as having served during the period of armed conflict from December 7, 1941, to August 15, 1945.

Federal legislation was passed in 1998 that lengthened the official time period for qualifying merchant marine and U.S. army and naval transport service vessel veterans from August 15, 1945, to December 31, 1946.

Summary of Bill:

The definition of a WWII merchant marine veteran and an army and navy transport civil service veteran is altered to no longer include the requirement that the veteran served during an armed conflict, and the dates of service are lengthened from August 15, 1945, to December 31, 1946, to be consistent with the federal definition of a WWII veteran.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill would make Washington law consistent with federal law, which was altered in 1998. The official date for all missing and dead soldiers from WWII is December 31, 1946, as President Truman declared. The U.S. Veterans and Improvement Benefits Act of 1998 changed the definition of a veteran. The Governor has one year to change laws to match U.S. laws.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Kessler, prime sponsor; and Harold Schmidt, merchant marine veteran.