

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESB 5626

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As Passed Senate, February 19, 2002

**Title:** An act relating to the definition of veteran.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the definition of veteran.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, Oke, Swecker, Winsley, Snyder, Shin, Roach, Patterson, McAuliffe and Benton; by request of Joint Select Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State & Local Government: 2/7/01, 3/5/01 [DP, DNP]; 2/4/02 [DP].  
Passed Senate: 2/13/02, 44-2; amended on reconsideration; passed Senate 2/19/02, 49-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Gardner, Chair; Hale, Haugen, Horn, Keiser, Kline, Roach, T. Sheldon and Swecker.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**Background:** The current statutory definition of "veteran" does not include peacetime veterans, except those who served between World Wars I and II, or those who served in the reserves or National Guard, or those who served in the Philippine Armed Forces and Scouts in World War II. It does include Merchant Mariners who served in World War II.

This definition governs eligibility for pre-LEOFF I fire fighters' pensions; police relief and pensions in first class cities; PERS Plan I retirement benefits; exemption from payment of fees at state universities, regional universities and The Evergreen State College; admission to the soldiers' and veterans' homes; veterans' preference on civil service exams; free license plates for disabled veterans and prisoners of war; county aid to indigent veterans and families; restrictions on sending veterans or families to alms houses; and county burial of indigent deceased veterans.

Drivers licenses issued to any person serving in the armed forces of the United States remain valid as long as the service continues.

**Summary of Bill:** For some purposes, the definition of veteran includes: (a) peacetime veterans and those who have fulfilled their initial military service obligation in any branch of the armed services and the National Guard and reserves; (b) those in the National Guard, reserves or Coast Guard who have been called into federal service by a presidential select reserve call up for at least 180 cumulative days; and (c) those who served in the Philippine Armed Forces or Scouts in World War II. The purposes to which this definition applies are

for the veterans' preference on civil service exams; free license plates; county aid to indigent veterans; restrictions on sending veterans to alms houses; and county burials.

Those eligible for the continuing valid drivers license include those whose service meets the existing definition of veteran.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board and Joint Committee on Pension Policy must study what would be the effect on their respective agencies of changing to the more inclusive definition of veteran.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Testimony For:** Veterans are huge assets in this state. We need to compete for these people and give all veterans the honor and dignity they deserve. It is important that none are excluded or penalized just because there happened to be no war to send them to during the time they were in the military.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Dennis Primoli, VLC.

**House Amendment(s):** The eligibility for the existing statutory benefit of not having to renew one's driver's licence is extended to those service members serving in the branches of the military service included in the new definition of "veteran."