

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1307

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to defining veteran for certain purposes.

Brief Description: Defining veteran for certain purposes.

Sponsors: By Representatives Haigh, Eickmeyer, Wallace, P. Sullivan, Morrell, Sells, Miloscia, Takko, Ormsby, McCoy, Conway, McDermott and Chase.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 2/2/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/05, 95-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/14/05, 37-1.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the definition of veteran for certain purposes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, Miloscia, Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

There are two main definitions of "veteran." One definition, which contains mostly wartime veterans, governs eligibility for programs like pensions and retirement benefits.

The other definition, which contains both wartime and peacetime veterans, applies to 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. This definition also applies to the statute that requires a Washington drivers' license to be in full effect for the entire time a person serves in the military. This broader definition of veteran includes a person honorably discharged, or discharged for medical reasons with an honorable record, who has served in at least one of the following capacities:

- as a member of any branch of the armed forces of the United States as long as he or she has fulfilled his or her initial military service obligation;
- as a member of the women's air forces service pilots;
- as a member of the armed forces reserves, national guard, or coast guard, and has been called into federal service for at least 180 days;
- as a civil service crew member with service aboard a U.S. Army Transport Service or a U.S. Naval Transportation Service vessel in oceangoing service from December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946; or
- as a member of the Philippine armed forces/scouts during the period of armed conflict from December 7, 1941, through August 15, 1945.

Summary of Bill:

The broader definition of veteran is expanded to include a United States documented merchant mariner with service aboard an oceangoing vessel operated by the Department of Defense, or its agents, from June 25, 1950, through July 27, 1953, in Korean territorial waters and from August 5, 1964, through May 7, 1975, in Vietnamese territorial waters.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The amendment requires a merchant mariner, in addition to the requirements in the original bill, to have received a military commendation in order to meet the definition of "veteran."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is about recognition of the service many members of the Merchant Marine have given to this country. The Merchant Marines were the life line during times of war; they delivered the goods to the troops. The federal government has issued campaign medals to members of the Merchant Marine, who ought to be included when people talk about honoring veterans.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Haigh, primie sponsor; Ron Springer, American Merchant Marine Veterans; and Dennis Primoli, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.