

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5058

As Passed Senate, February 2, 2007

Title: An act relating to establishing the eastern Washington state veterans' cemetery.

Brief Description: Establishing the eastern Washington state veterans' cemetery.

Sponsors: Senators Marr, McCaslin, Brown, Parlette, Haugen, Shin, Murray and Roach; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/16/07, 1/18/07 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 1/23/07 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/02/07, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Kline, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7784)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Chelsea Buchanan (786-7446)

Background: The state of Washington does not own or operate a veterans' cemetery. Federal law guarantees veterans interment in national cemeteries, and one such cemetery can be found in Tahoma, Washington, in the western part of the state.

In September 2006, as directed by the Legislature, the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs submitted a feasibility study and a business plan for a state veterans' cemetery to be established in eastern Washington.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: The state establishes the Eastern Washington State Veterans' Cemetery, in which all honorably discharged veterans are entitled to interment. The Department of Veterans Affairs is directed to access available resources including federal burial benefits, and to adopt rules governing services, eligibility, fees, and cemetery operations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Government Operations & Elections): PRO: Washington will receive federal funds for the design and construction of the cemetery. The state will pay for the land. Some funds will come from sales of armed forces license plates, which are exceeding expectations. This is the issue rated number one by veterans. We need to establish this cemetery in order to meet the needs of Washington's veterans.

Persons Testifying (Government Operations & Elections): PRO: Senator Chris Marr, prime sponsor; John E. Lee, Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This is a top priority of veterans' groups in Washington State and is long overdue. This is a much better option for veterans and their families in eastern Washington. Two possible sites are being considered, one in Medical Lake and one near Fairchild Air Force Base.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Chris Marr, prime sponsor; John E. Lee, Director, Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs.