

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5035

As Passed Senate, March 12, 2009

Title: An act relating to improving veterans' access to services.

Brief Description: Improving veterans' access to services.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hobbs, Swecker, Marr, Roach, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Hatfield, McAuliffe and Haugen; by request of Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/15/09, 1/20/09 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/12/09, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5035 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) was created in 1976. Prior to its creation, veterans were served by the Department of Social and Health Services.

The WDVA provides many services to veterans and their families. Included among the services, the WDVA provides assistance with claims to access VA benefits, Veterans Estate Management Program, post traumatic stress disorder counseling, homeless veterans outreach, and education and employment assistance.

Currently, Washington ranks 12th nationwide for the total number of veterans in the state. As of 2000, the WDVA estimates there may be as many as 670,628 veterans in Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The WDVA must create a five-year plan to identify all veterans in the state and identify veterans in the state as the veteran population changes.

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.

The WDVA must identify improved referral methods and improved communication tools so veterans can be directed to available state and federal aid programs.

Savings and costs must be itemized and potential legislative needs discussed.

The report is due January 1, 2010.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: The WDVA supports this bill. We believe that an accurate study will allow more efficient use of existing services and will allow the VA to assist veterans. It is important in these economic times to link veterans with needs to programs that will best serve them. Often these programs are federally funded and will result in savings to the state.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Alfie Alvarado, Deputy Director, WDVA.