

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6507

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs
Capital Budget

Title: An act relating to creating the Walla Walla state veterans' home.

Brief Description: Establishing the Walla Walla state veterans' home.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Hewitt, Kilmer, Swecker, Shin and Roach; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/16/12, 2/20/12 [DP];
Capital Budget: 2/23/12 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Walla Walla State Veterans' Home.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Overstreet, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Condotta, Darneille, Dunshee, McCoy and Miloscia.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

The Department of Veterans' Affairs manages three state veteran homes: the Washington Soldiers' Home and Colony at Orting, the Washington Veterans' Home in Retsil, and the Spokane Veterans' Home.

The Washington Soldiers' Home was established in 1891. It has a residential capacity of 183 and provides long-term health care for honorably discharged veterans and in some instances, their spouses, who are disabled and indigent or likely to become indigent due to the cost of

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their health care. The Washington Veterans' Home was originally established in 1910, and a new state of the art facility was completed in 2005. The Washington Veterans' Home is a non-institutional facility and serves 240 residents needing skilled-nursing care. The Spokane Veterans' Home opened October 1, 2001, and has 100 skilled-level nursing beds.

All Washington State veterans' homes are Medicare and Medicaid certified facilities. To be eligible for admission, applicants must be indigent and unable to support themselves and their families and must meet the following criteria:

- served at any time in any branch of the United States Armed Forces including the National Guard;
- received an honorable discharge; and
- reside in Washington.

The spouse or widow of an eligible veteran may also be eligible for admission.

Summary of Bill:

The Walla Walla State Veterans' Home is established for veterans and their spouses who meet the eligibility criteria. The act takes effect upon certification by the Director of the Office of Financial Management that specific funding is provided by June 30, 2012, in the omnibus capital appropriations act for the state's share of funding required by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs State Home Construction Grant Program. Notice of the certification must be filed with the Code Reviser for publication in the Washington State Register.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect June 30, 2012. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are approximately 670,000 veterans residing in Washington and this number is growing. A veterans' home in Walla Walla is needed.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Ted Wicorek, Veterans' Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dunshee, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Asay, Jinkins, Lytton, Pearson, Smith, Tharinger and Wylie.

Staff: Steve Masse (786-7115).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Capital Budget Compared to Recommendation of Committee On State Government & Tribal Affairs:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 30, 2012. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Walla Walla State Veterans' home is a much needed facility for the state's veterans. The operating costs of the facility should not need state assistance.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Gary Contra, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Ted Wicorek, Veterans' Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.