

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1806

As Reported by House Committee On:
Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to the definition of veteran for purposes of veterans' assistance programs.

Brief Description: Addressing the definition of veteran for purposes of veterans' assistance programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Hansen, Magendanz, Appleton, Morrell, Bergquist and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 2/19/13, 2/20/13 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows a county's veterans' assistance program to provide services to service members who received a general discharge under honorable conditions or a medical discharge.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives McCoy, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Angel, Ranking Minority Member; Johnson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Pike, Ryu, Santos and Sawyer.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

In 2005 the Legislature required each county to establish a veterans' assistance program (VAP) to provide relief for indigent veterans and their families. Under the program, each county must create a veterans' advisory board to determine the needs of local indigent veterans and the available resources and programs that could benefit indigent veterans and

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their families. Counties also must pay for the burial or cremation costs of indigent veterans and their families.

County VAP funding is established in the Veterans' Assistance Fund (Fund). The Legislature authorizes counties to levy a tax for the Fund. The Fund may be used for veterans' assistance programs, the burial or cremation of indigent veterans or their families, and direct or indirect costs of the administration of the Fund.

"Indigent Veteran" Definition.

For purposes of the VAP, "veteran" has the same meaning as the general statutory definitions of veteran, including active service members who have served in an armed conflict and members of the armed forces, reserves, or National Guard who have received an honorable or medical discharge and have fulfilled their military service obligations. Indigent status is determined by each county, based on public assistance received, income level, or ability to afford basic needs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A county may decide to extend VAP services to any service member who has received a general discharge under honorable conditions or a medical or physical discharge with an honorable record.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Service members who receive a general discharge under honorable conditions do not have to also have served 180 days. The exception from 180 days of service for service members receiving a medical or physical discharge is removed to avoid redundancy. The inclusion of service members who have been deployed in an armed conflict is removed to avoid redundancy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 15, 2013.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will make it a little easier for veterans who, in the judgment of the county, need help but do not meet the technical definitions in currently existence. A general discharge under honorable conditions means "military services that is satisfactory but not sufficiently meritorious to warrant and honorable discharge." It does not mean the person is

bad. This allows services to be provided to a larger number of veterans and will address more homeless veterans and veterans with disabilities. It helps to address the backlog in the disabled veterans' administration.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hanson, prime sponsor; and Roth Hafer, Kitsap Veterans Advisory Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.