

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2129

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

**Title:** An act relating to veterans' homes.

**Brief Description:** Concerning veterans' homes.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Nealey, Walsh, Seaquist, Haler, Appleton, Ross, Green, Morrell, Hayes, Haigh, Van De Wege and Orwall; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/16/14, 1/23/14 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Walla Walla Veterans' Home as a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home.
- Allows admission to the state veterans' homes for parents whose children died while serving in the Armed Forces.
- Removes the indigency eligibility requirement for admission to the state veterans' homes.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Sawyer, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Holy, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Hope, Robinson, Santos and Young.

**Staff:** Sean Flynn (786-7124).

**Background:**

The state Constitution mandates that the Legislature provide a soldiers' home for honorably discharged resident soldiers, sailors, and marines who were disabled while in the line of duty.

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*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.*

In 1890 the Legislature created the Washington Soldiers' Home in Orting. In 1907 the Legislature established a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home in Retsil, called the Washington Veterans' Home. In 2001 the Legislature established another branch in Spokane, called the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home.

The Washington Soldiers' Home, the Washington Veterans' Home, and the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home (collectively the state veterans' homes) are managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (Department). The Department must provide maintenance to residents, including room and board, medical, dental, domiciliary and nursing care, physical and occupational therapy, and recreational activities.

Certain qualifying veterans are eligible for admission to the state veterans' homes if they are state residents and are indigent and unable to support themselves or their families. Spouses and domestic partners of qualifying veterans also are eligible for admission, as well as spouses and domestic partners of veterans who died, if the deceased spouse or partner was a resident or eligible for admission at the time of death, or if the spouse has become indigent since the veteran's death. Spouses or domestic partners of deceased service members also must be at least 50 years old and must have been married to the service member, or living together in a partnership, for at least three years to be eligible for admission.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The Walla Walla Veterans' Home is established as a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home.

Applicants do not have to be indigent to be eligible for admission in the state veterans' homes.

Parents whose children died while serving in the Armed Forces are eligible for admission to the state veterans' homes.

The eligibility requirement that spouses or domestic partners of deceased service members must be at least 50 years old and must have been married to the service member for at least three years is removed.

The Department may provide domiciliary and nursing care at the state veterans' homes, but it is not mandated.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** 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 updates some outdated provisions in the existing statute for the state veterans' homes. The Walla Walla Veterans' Home project was supposed to begin construction this year but has been delayed by the land transfer with the federal Department of Veterans Administration. The inclusion of the home is still necessary. The other fixes bring the statute in compliance with current practice and federal law. Indigency is no longer required to receive services in the veterans' homes. Parents of deceased veterans qualify for any child who died while serving. The expanded Medicare services and short-term care provided at the homes contain services for spouses under 50 years old.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; and Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.