

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2668

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

Title: An act relating to insurance for enlisted members of the Washington national guard.

Brief Description: Concerning insurance for enlisted members of the Washington national guard.

Sponsors: Representatives Sawyer, Zeiger, Muri, Tarleton, Seaquist, Moscoso, Reykdal, Sells, Rodne, Stanford, Gregerson, Morrell, Freeman and Ortiz-Self.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/28/14, 1/30/14 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Entitles enlisted National Guard members to receive payments for the monthly premiums for health and dental plans provided through the federal military health program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Sawyer, Vice Chair; Gregerson, Robinson and Santos.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Holy, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hope and Young.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

The State Militia.

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 state Constitution provides for the organization of the state militia with the Governor serving as Commander-in-Chief. The organized militia consists of the National Guard and the State Guard. The Governor may call the entire militia into active service, but the National Guard may also be called into federal service. The State Guard is available to serve when the National Guard is called into federal service.

The Governor may order the state militia into active service, among other purposes, in the event of war or other threat of force or violence against the laws of the state or the United States, or for a public disaster or when otherwise required for the health, safety, or welfare of the public.

Officers and enlisted members of the state militia, while in active state service or inactive duty, are entitled to receive the same amount of pay and allowances from the state as provided by federal laws and regulations for officers and enlisted members of the United States Army. State payment is only provided if federal pay and allowances are not authorized. For periods of active state service, officers and enlisted members receive the greater of the amount of the Army pay and benefits, or an amount equal to one and one-half of the federal minimum wage.

Military Health Program.

Active military service members and National Guard and reserve members and their families are eligible to participate in the military health program, known as TRICARE. The TRICARE program combines health care resources at military hospitals and clinics with civilian health care networks. The TRICARE program offers certain premium-based health and dental plans for purchase by National Guard and reserve members who are not on active duty and not otherwise eligible for federal health benefits.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Lower ranking National Guard members who enlist after August 1, 2014, for three years, are eligible for state payment of the monthly premiums of health and dental plans offered through the federal military system for inactive National Guard and reserve members.

The state selects the premium-based health plan for the eligible member, which lasts for the period of the member's enlistment, unless:

- the member no longer qualifies for the plan;
- the member is enrolled or eligible under a federal employee health plan; or
- the military health system no longer offers the plan.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The state's obligation to pay the monthly premium of health and dental plans is limited to plans for which inactive service members are eligible. The state is not obligated to pay for health and dental plan premiums if the federal plan is eliminated or if the member is eligible for a federal employee health or dental plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 30, 2014.

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) The state has a responsibility to encourage citizens to serve in the National Guard. Enlisted members spend about \$90 per month on health care insurance, and only are paid \$210 per month. One of the primary reasons members are not able to deploy is due to dental problems. Providing health care insurance to National Guard members helps to ensure peak readiness of the National Guard if they are called into active service. The bill is intended to be limited to paying premiums for TRICARE Reserve Select.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sawyer, prime sponsor; and Josh Halpin, National Guard Association of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.