
**Community Development, Housing &
Tribal Affairs Committee**

SSB 5975

Brief Description: Concerning the veterans innovations program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Conway, Bailey, Braun, Hobbs, Rolfes and McAuliffe; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Eliminates the Defender's Fund and the Competitive Grant Program from the Veterans Innovations Program (VIP).
- Requires the VIP to provide funding and support to eligible veterans and service members for crisis relief and education, training, and employment opportunities.

Hearing Date: 2/26/14

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

In 2006 the Legislature created the Veterans Innovations Program (VIP) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to provide crisis and emergency relief and education, training, and employment assistance to veterans and their families. The DVA may receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public and private sources for the benefit of the VIP. The VIP has its own account from which expenditures may only be used for VIP purposes.

The VIP consists of two separate programs: The Defender's Fund and the Competitive Grant Program. The Defender's Fund provides assistance to veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, or post-9/11 homeland security missions who are experiencing financial hardships due to their time away from home. Veterans eligible under the Defender's Fund may receive a one-time grant of up to \$500.

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 Competitive Grant Program funds proposals by veterans through a competitive selection process, based on three categories of need: crisis and emergency relief; education, training, and employment assistance; and community outreach and resources.

Summary of Bill:

The Defender's Fund and the Competitive Grant Program are eliminated within the VIP. Under the VIP, the DVA must provide funding and support to eligible veterans, National Guard members, and members of the Armed Forces reserves for crisis relief and education, training, and employment opportunities. The DVA must establish a process to make veterans and National Guard members and reservists aware of the VIP and to assist them in completing the VIP application.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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