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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2496**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** House Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Kilduff, Muri, Shea, Orwall, Klippert, Hayes, Sawyer, Hansen, Rodne, Haler, Goodman, Jinkins, Kuderer, Appleton, Zeiger, Frame, Rossetti, Magendanz, Wilson, McBride, Ormsby, Bergquist, Gregerson, Sells, Stanford, and Scott; by request of Attorney General)

AN ACT Relating to pro bono legal services for military service members, veterans, and their families; and adding new sections to chapter 43.10 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) There is hereby created an office of military and veteran legal assistance within the office of the attorney general for the purpose of promoting and facilitating civil legal assistance programs, pro bono services, and self-help services for military service members, veterans, and their family members domiciled or stationed in Washington state.

(2) For the purposes of sections 1 through 3 of this act, the following definitions apply:

(a) The term "service member" means an active or reserve member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including the national guard, coast guard, and armed forces reserves.

(b) The term "veteran" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 41.04.005 and 41.04.007.

(c) The term "family member" means the spouse or domestic partner, surviving spouse, surviving domestic partner, and dependent minor children of a living or deceased service member or veteran for whom the service member or veteran provided at least one-half of that person's support in the previous one hundred eighty days before seeking assistance of the programs and services authorized by this chapter.

(3) The attorney general may not directly provide legal assistance, advice, or representation in any context, unless otherwise authorized by law, and the attorney general may not provide legal assistance programs, pro bono services, or self-help services to a service member, veteran, or family member being criminally prosecuted.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The office of military and veteran legal assistance shall:

(1) Recruit and train volunteer attorneys and service programs willing to perform pro bono services for service members, veterans, and their family members, and create and maintain a registry of the same;

(2) Assess and assign requests for pro bono services to volunteer attorneys and service programs registered with the office; and

(3) Establish an advisory committee that will include, among others, representatives from legal assistance offices on military installations, the office of civil legal aid, the Washington state bar association's legal assistance to military personnel section, the Washington state veterans bar association, relevant office of military service and support organizations, and organizations involved in coordinating, supporting, and delivering civil legal aid and pro bono legal services in Washington state. The committee shall provide advice and assistance regarding program design, operation, volunteer recruitment and support strategies, service delivery objectives and priorities, and funding.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The attorney general may apply for and receive grants, gifts, donations, bequests, or other contributions to help support and to be used exclusively for the operations of the office of military and veteran legal assistance.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Any attorney who is licensed to practice law in this state and who renders pro bono services for the office of military and veteran legal assistance is not liable for any civil damages as a result of any act or omission by the attorney in rendering such services if the services were rendered in good faith and in a manner not amounting to gross negligence.

(2) The state is not liable in any civil action for any deleterious outcomes from the activities described in section 2 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 4 of this act are each added to chapter 43.10 RCW.

**--- END ---**