

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2040

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

Title: An act relating to increasing employment for veterans.

Brief Description: Initiating a campaign to increase veteran employment.

Sponsors: Representatives McCabe, Caldier, Senn, Harris, McBride, Dent, Johnson, Sells, Kagi, Kilduff and Wilson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 2/17/15, 2/19/15 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/26/15, 2/27/15 [DP2S(w/o sub CDHT)].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Initiates a campaign to increase veteran employment.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Sawyer and Van De Wege.

Staff: Kirsten Lee (786-7133).

Background:

Veteran Employment Preferences.

Both federal and state law provide preferences for veterans in employment in federal, state, and local government. In Washington, if a veteran must take a competitive examination for public employment qualification purposes, 5- or 10-percentage points will be added to an eligible veteran's passing score. If an examination is not required, eligible veterans, their

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surviving spouses, and spouses of honorably discharged veterans with a permanent and total service-connected disability are preferred for public employment.

In 2011 legislation was enacted that allows private employers to also give voluntary hiring preferences to honorably discharged veterans.

Veterans Advisory Boards.

The legislative authority for each county is required to establish a veterans' advisory board. The board must advise the legislative authority of the needs of local indigent veterans, resources available to local indigent veterans, and programs that could benefit the needs of the local indigent veterans and their families. Members of the board must be veterans. The majority of board members must be from a nationally recognized veterans organization.

Associate Development Organizations.

An associated development organization (ADO) is a local economic development nonprofit corporation that is broadly representative of community interests. Associated development organizations serve as a point of contact for local economic development activities, supporting new business development and recruitment, and coordinating business retention and expansion activities within their area and are commonly referred to as an economic development council. Each county in Washington has designated an organization as their ADO. There are 34 ADOs total. The Department of Commerce contracts with each of the ADOs to provide technical and financial support for ADOs activities.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Department Veterans Affairs, Employment Security Department, and Department of Commerce are required to consult local chambers of commerce, associate development organizations, and businesses to initiate a campaign to increase veteran employment in Washington. "Veteran" is defined as any honorably discharged veteran.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is required to maintain a database of state agencies, local governments, local chambers of commerce, associate development organizations, and businesses that have chosen to participate in the campaign. All participants in the campaign are encouraged to work with veterans' advisory boards. Funds used for the campaign must be from existing resources.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill changes the definition of "veteran" to any veteran discharged under honorable conditions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 13, 2015.

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 campaign to increase veteran employment fills a void that is currently not being met in communities. The idea behind the campaign is not to incentivize businesses to hire veterans, but for businesses to hire veterans because they served our country and for each business to hire at least one veteran. The campaign may initially need to be made smaller to prevent a fiscal impact and to demonstrate that the program can be successful. The national veteran unemployment rate is 22 percent and this legislation is an excellent way to decrease the unemployment rate.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McCabe, prime sponsor; Alfie Alvarado, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs; Ted Wicorek and Dick Marcelynas, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Parker, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Wilcox, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buys, Carlyle, Cody, Condotta, Dent, Dunshee, Fagan, Haler, Hansen, Hudgins, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, MacEwen, Magendanz, Pettigrew, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stokesbary, Sullivan, Tharinger, Van Werven and Walkinshaw.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives G. Hunt and Taylor.

Staff: James Kettel (786-7123).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs:

The Appropriations Committee recommends deleting the requirement that the Department of Veterans Affairs maintain a database of campaign participants. The Appropriations Committee also recommends adding language to clarify that businesses may share information about veteran employment with local chambers of commerce and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to encourage campaign participants to work with the Washington State Military Transition Council.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Second 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) Washington is home to more than 600,000 veterans, and the population is growing by about 13,000 per year. The unemployment rate for veterans, who are between the ages of 18 and 25, is about 21 percent. It is Washington's responsibility to help veterans as much as possible. This bill will help honorable veterans to find employment, and will encourage businesses to hire veterans. Some of the most valuable employees are veterans. The caliber of veteran employees is exceptional, and veterans have great work ethic. Some veterans actually decline benefits because they want to make sure that a 20-year-old veteran with a family can receive support. Veterans really want jobs. The goal is to ask all businesses to hire at least one veteran. The job and the pay are of less concern to many veterans who really just want to feel important and to have a regular schedule. Many more veterans will be seeking employment as the military continues to downsize. This is a perfect time to connect veterans seeking employment with businesses seeking employees.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McCabe, prime sponsor; and Alfie Alvarado, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.