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

SB 5171

Brief Description: Concerning the definition of veteran for the purposes of the county veterans assistance fund.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Conway, Hobbs, Hewitt, Angel, Chase and Rolfes.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies the definitions of "veteran" and "family" for the purposes of the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Kirsten Lee (786-7133).

Background:

Veteran's Assistance Program.

In 2005 the Legislature required each county to establish a Veteran's Assistance Program (VAP) to provide relief for indigent veterans and their families. Under the VAP, a county must provide funding for qualifying indigent and suffering veterans, or family members. The county must consult with and solicit recommendations from the local veterans' advisory board to determine the appropriate services needed for local indigent veterans. Counties also must pay for the burial or cremation costs of indigent veterans and their families.

Veterans' Assistance Fund.

County VAP funding is established in a Veterans' Assistance Fund (Fund). The Legislature has authorized counties to levy taxes for the Fund. The Fund may be used for the VAPs, the burial or cremation of indigent veterans or their families, and direct or indirect costs of the administration of the Fund.

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.

For purposes of qualifying for veterans' assistance funding, "family" means: (1) the spouse or domestic partner; (2) the surviving spouse; (3) the surviving domestic partner; and (4) dependent children, of a living or deceased veteran. The definition of "veteran" includes: (1) active service members who served in an armed conflict; and (2) members of the armed forces, Reserves, or National Guard, who received an honorable or medical discharge and have fulfilled their military service obligations. A county may extend VAP services to any service member who has received a general discharge under honorable conditions or a medical discharge. Indigent status is determined by each county, based on public assistance received, income level, or ability to afford basic needs.

Summary of Bill:

The definition of "family" for purposes of the Veterans' Assistance Fund is modified to also apply to spouses, surviving domestic partners, and dependent children of service members who were killed in the line of duty regardless of the number of days served.

The definition of "veteran" is defined solely for the purposes of the Veteran's Assistance Fund as a person who served in the active military with any branch of service, or was a World War II-era civil service crew member, who meets the following criteria:

- served at least 180 days and was released with military discharge;
- received an honorable or general under honorable characterization of service with a medical reason, regardless of days served;
- received an honorable discharge and has received a rating for a service connected disability from the United States Department of Veteran's Affairs, regardless of days served;
- is a current member honorably serving in the armed serves reserve or National Guard who was activated by presidential call up for purposes other than training; or
- is a former member of the Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard who fulfilled his or her initial military service obligation and was released with honorable characterization of service.

Counties have the discretion to expand the eligibility for purposes of the Veterans' Assistance Fund.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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