

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5633

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

**Title:** An act relating to creating a coordinator for the helmets to hardhats program in the department of veterans affairs.

**Brief Description:** Creating a coordinator for the helmets to hardhats program in the department of veterans affairs.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Conway, O'Ban, Hobbs, Chase, Kohl-Welles, Lias, McCoy and Hatfield).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 3/16/15, 3/19/15 [DPA];  
Appropriations: 4/6/15, 4/7/15 [DPA(CDHT)].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by Committee)**

- Creates a coordinator for the national Helmets to Hardhats program in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Moscoso and Sawyer.

**Staff:** Kirsten Lee (786-7133).

**Background:**

Helmets to Hardhats.

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*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.*

Helmets to Hardhats is a national nonprofit program designed to connect National Guard, Reserve, retired, and transitioning active-duty military service members with skilled training and career opportunities in the construction industry.

The program provides former and transitioning military personnel with job postings from the building and construction trades nationwide, which can be accessed online. To apply for work or membership, a candidate for employment completes a profile that informs hiring managers what transferable skills the candidate acquired during military service. Once a candidate submits interest in a career opportunity, they are contacted by a Helmets to Hardhats representative to ensure all application requirements are met.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

A coordinator position for the national Helmets to Hardhats program is created within the Department of Veterans Affairs, subject to available funding.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill changes a reference to the Helmets to Hardhats program from a federal program to a national program.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended 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) There is no longer funding for the Helmets to Hardhats state coordinator position. The position was previously funded through contributions from the National Building Trades Council and the Helmets to Hardhats program. Todd Mitchell was the previous Helmets to Hardhats coordinator, starting his position in 2008. From 2008 to 2012, Todd helped 523 veterans transition into apprenticeship programs with an average wage of approximately \$38 per hour. Previously, the Helmet to Hardhats coordinator spent time at the transition center at Joint Base Lewis-McCord. Often the formula for successful transition from military service to a civilian job differs from person to person. Everyone has a different set of challenges and interests. Many veterans are used to taking orders, so it is helpful to have someone to guide them with the next steps. It takes a different set of skills to sit with these individuals to assist in planning the best for them. Currently, the peer to peer, navigator piece that the previous Helmets to Hardhats coordinator was able to provide them with is missing.

The construction industry in Washington is recovering from the recession and the apprenticeship opportunities are being reopened. Over 100,000 jobs are predicted to be created in the next few years within the transportation industry if the transportation package is passed. Old and young men and women, approximately 8,000 to 10,000 veterans, are returning from combat zones, many of which would like the type of jobs the construction industry offers.

This bill restores the state Helmets to Hardhats coordinator position. The idea is that the new coordinator would be open to working with all stations and act as a point of contact for the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, assisting veterans with transitioning and to help them find family wage construction jobs in Washington.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Chris Winters, International Unions of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5; and Heidi Audette, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended 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; Carlyle, Cody, Condotta, Dent, Dunshee, Fagan, Haler, Hansen, Hudgins, G. Hunt, S. Hunt, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, MacEwen, Magendanz, Pettigrew, Sawyer, Senn, Springer, Stokesbary, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Van Werven and Walkinshaw.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Buys.

**Staff:** James Kettel (786-7123).

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

No new changes were recommended.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended 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 former statewide coordinator position for the Helmets to Hardhats program was funded by federal dollars. During the time when the position was in place, about 520 veterans were placed into apprenticeships at an average wage of \$38 per hour. The statewide position was important for coordination, and to actively seek apprenticeships for veterans. Unfortunately, the federal funding dried up around the same time that the construction industry slowed down. As the construction industry regains momentum, and a reduction of the military is sending about 11,000 service members to Washington every year, this is a perfect time to reestablish a program that has proven to be successful in placing veterans into living wage jobs.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Alfie Alvarado, Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.