

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2496

As of February 25, 2016

Title: An act relating to pro bono legal services for military service members, veterans, and their families.

Brief Description: Concerning pro bono legal services for military service members, veterans, and their families.

Sponsors: House Committee on 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).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/17/16, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/26/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Tim Ford (786-7423)

Background: State law prohibits the Office of the Attorney General from engaging in the private practice of law. The Office of the Attorney General cannot represent private citizens in court either to bring an action on behalf of an individual or to defend an individual. Any private citizen needing such representation should consult a private attorney.

Veterans, military personnel and their families may be eligible to receive some free or low fee legal services from a variety of regional and statewide non-profits depending upon their means and the resources of the non-profit entities.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Amendment): An office of military and veteran legal assistance is created 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. The legal assistance program does not permit the Office of the Attorney General to provide criminal legal assistance.

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 legal assistance program shall recruit and train volunteer attorneys and service programs willing to perform pro bono legal services for military members, veterans, and their families. The Attorney General may apply for and receive grants, gifts, or other contributions to support this legal assistance program.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (Proposed Amendments): Removes immunity from liability for the state and volunteer attorneys. The advisory committee includes the Washington State veterans bar association.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.