

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2645

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

**Title:** An act relating to the definition of veterans of armed conflicts.

**Brief Description:** Addressing the definition of veterans of armed conflicts.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Muri, Appleton and Eslick.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/23/18, 1/30/18 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Designates the War on Terrorism (2001-present) as a period of war for purposes of the combat veteran definition.
- Designates November 30, 1995, as the end of the Persian Gulf War, for the combat veteran definition.
- Includes certain specific campaigns within the combat veteran definition.

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jenkin, Reeves and Sawyer.

**Staff:** Sean Flynn (786-7124).

**Background:**

Washington provides certain recognition benefits to persons based on their status as a military service veteran. Veteran status, generally, is recognized for a service member who received an honorable discharge, or other excusable discharge. Benefits for such general service status include, among others: free license plate decals; admission to state soldiers'

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and veterans' homes; veterans' scoring preference on civil service exams; and veteran homeownership down payment assistance programs.

A separate status is recognized for veterans who served in a period of war or conflict. Such combat veterans are eligible to receive additional benefits, including, but not limited to: higher scoring preference on civil service exams; service credit for retirement pension purposes; participation in a designated shared leave pool program; and property tax relief for senior widows of veterans.

The definition for a combat veteran includes a veteran who received an honorable discharge, or is actively serving honorably and has either: (1) served in a period of war or conflict; or (2) received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) for combat in a foreign territory. The Department of Defense has designated certain conflicts under which service qualifies for the AFEM. In addition to the AFEM, certain conflicts also qualify for specific medals of participation.

A period of war includes World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, the Vietnam era, the Persian Gulf War, and any future period that includes a congressional declaration of war. A period of war also covers certain armed conflicts where the participant has been awarded a campaign badge or medal. Such conflicts include: the crisis in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada; Operation Just Cause (Panama); Operation Restore Hope (Somalia); Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti); Operation Joint Endeavor (Bosnia); Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Enduring Freedom (southern or central Asia); and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Persian Gulf).

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### **Summary of Bill:**

The War on Terrorism is designated as a period of war, qualifying for combat veteran status, beginning on September 11, 2001, and lasting until the end is prescribed by presidential proclamation. The specific campaign medals for the specific campaigns during that period are eliminated from the definition of a period of war, including Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Certain specific campaigns are added to the list of conflicts included as a period of war, including:

- multinational force Beirut (Lebanon, 1982-84);
- Operation Power Pack (Dominican Republic);
- Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada);
- Operation Deliberate Force (Bosnia); and
- Operation allied Force (Kosovo).

Finally, the period designated for the end of the Persian Gulf War is November 30, 1995.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill would honor the service of our veterans. It recognizes service members who have served after September 11, 2001, as serving in a period of war.

(Opposed) This change in definition departs from current law and how periods of war are recognized. Further coordination with the state retirement systems may be helpful to determine eligibility requirements and consider other proposals to amend the definitions that account for the time of service in combat status.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Muri, prime sponsor; Representative Kilduff; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; and Geoff Simpson, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters.

(Opposed) Bryce Yadon, Futurewise.

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