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

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**HB 2773**

**Brief Description:** Creating the veterans service officer program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Maycumber, Chapman, Van Werven, Shea, Steele, Appleton, Young and Reeves.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Veterans Service Officer Program to provide funding for counties to establish veterans service officers.

**Hearing Date:** 1/24/18

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

**Background:**

Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) assist veterans and their families with claims for federal veterans benefits. VSOs work at both state and county levels, in addition to working for private non-profit groups that are typically veteran focused. In some counties, VSOs are funded through local Veterans Assistance Programs established to help provide relief and assistance to indigent veterans and their families. Counties are authorized to levy special taxes to fund their Veterans Assistance Programs.

In order for a VSO to represent a veteran in his or her VA claims, the VSO must undergo a formal application and training process and be accredited by the VA. Lists of accredited VSOs for each state are maintained by the VA. The WDVA facilitates the accreditation process for VSOs and currently assists local governments and organizations funding their own VSOs in this process.

**Summary of Bill:**

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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.*

The Veterans Service Officer Program (Program) is created within the WDVA to provide funding to underserved counties with populations of 100,000 or less, enabling them to establish local veterans service officers. Under the Program, subject to amounts appropriated, the WDVA is required to:

- educate certain military members, veterans, and local governments about the Program; and
- develop partnerships with and provide funding to participating eligible counties to help establish local accredited veterans service officers.

The application process for the Program is prescribed by the WDVA.

A nonappropriated account, the Veterans Service Officer Fund (Fund), is established to receive appropriations from the Legislature and funds from other sources for the Program. The Director of the WDVA or his or her designee is authorized to make expenditures from the Fund. Funding from the WDVA through the Fund is available to eligible counties on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on 1/19/18.

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