

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2456

As of February 16, 2018

Title: An act relating to increasing employment opportunities for spouses of military members.

Brief Description: Increasing employment opportunities for spouses of military members.

Sponsors: House Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Kilduff, McCabe, Orwall, Reeves, Kraft, Senn, Gregerson, Muri, Riccelli, Stanford, Tharinger and Young).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/07/18, 98-0.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/16/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the departments of Commerce, Employment Security, and Veterans Affairs to initiate a campaign to increase employment opportunities for spouses of military members serving on active duty.
- Requires the Employment Security Department (ESD) to report increasing participation in unemployment insurance by spouses of military members while on overseas deployment.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

Background: Veteran Employment Campaign. In 2015, the Legislature directed the Department of Veterans Affairs, ESD, and Department of Commerce to initiate a demonstration campaign to increase veteran employment. The campaign, known as YesVets, consists of a partnership among the departments and local chambers of commerce across the state, and includes business owners sharing information about veteran employment.

All participants in the campaign are encouraged to work with the Washington State Military Transition Council and veterans advisory boards. Funds used for the campaign must be from existing resources.

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.

Unemployment Insurance. The unemployment insurance system provides partial wage replacement benefits for workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. An individual who quits work to relocate for the employment of a spouse, including a mandatory military transfer, quits work for good cause. An individual is eligible to receive unemployment benefits if the individual:

- worked at least 680 hours in covered employment in the individual's base year;
- was separated from employment through no fault of the individual's own or quit work for good cause; and
- is able to work and is actively searching for suitable work; and
- is legally authorized to work in the United States and authorized to work during the base year.

For each week in which an individual files a claim for benefits, the individual must make at least three contacts with employers or participate in three in-person job search activities at the local WorkSource office, or do any combination of three employer contacts or in-person job search activities.

Summary of Bill: Employment Campaign. The employment campaign, known as YesVets, is expanded to include spouses of military members on active duty.

Military member on active duty means a person who is serving on full-time active duty in the armed forces of the United States.

Unemployment Insurance. ESD must, within existing resources, study the barriers that exist for spouses of military members and actions that can provide greater opportunities for their participation in the unemployment insurance program while on overseas deployment with their military spouse. ESD must confer with relevant state and federal agencies on: labor market and job resources for spouses on overseas military bases, including opportunities to work remotely and resources available on military bases that can assist with remote work opportunities.

By December 1, 2019, ESD must report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, on the study and implementation plans for increased participation in the unemployment insurance program. The report should include consideration of how regulations are compatible with federal standards and whether any proposed legislation may be required.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This idea came from military spouses who shared their story of difficulty in finding work. Many times when seeking jobs the employer becomes aware of the fact that someone is a military spouse which often reflects on the

outcome of receiving a job opportunity due to a perceived risk that the individual will not be reliable or stay long term. Overseas deployments also often result in gaps in resumes when job opportunities are not available which is difficult for the family during the unemployment as well as for the individual seeking a job when they return to the United States. The YesVets program has been very successful, but this bill addresses the other half, the spouses, that are also impacted. Washington State is a leader in these issues and should continue to be a leader by making sure military spouses have every opportunity to seek employment in our state.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Christine Kilduff, Prime Sponsor; Jerry Fugich, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Hilda Pietri, citizen; Tanja Struyck-Fogleman, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.