

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6194

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As of January 26, 2018

**Title:** An act relating to the department of veterans affairs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the department of veterans affairs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Angel, Rolfes, Conway and Wagoner; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/26/18.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) director appoint a deputy director and assistant directors, rather than assistants and executive staff, to administer WDVA.
- Changes the title of the managers of state veterans homes to administrator.
- Requires the WDVA provide hiring preference to honorably discharged veterans when hiring administrators for state veterans homes.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

**Background:** The WDVA provides many services and benefits to veterans and their families, including: counseling, employment, education, training, burial, housing, medical care, and relief programs. The director of the WDVA conducts, controls, and supervises the WDVA. The director also holds the power to appoint and employ personnel for the WDVA, including assistants and executive staff. The director is required to designate a deputy from the executive staff to supervise the WDVA in the director's absence. The director and all appointed assistants and executive staff must be veterans.

The WDVA operates four state veterans homes: the Washington Veterans Home located in Port Orchard; the Washington Soldiers Home located in Orting; the Spokane Veterans Home

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located in Spokane; and the Walla Walla Veterans Home located in Walla Walla. Veterans with an honorable discharge who reside in the state, and their spouses or domestic partners, are eligible to apply for admission to a state veterans home. The director must appoint a superintendent to manage each state veterans home. Each superintendent must be licensed by the Department of Health as a nursing home administrator.

**Summary of Bill:** The WDVA director will appoint a deputy director and assistant directors, rather than assistants and executive staff, to administer WDVA.

The title of the individual appointed to manage each state veterans home is administrator, rather than superintendent. When hiring an administrator for a state veterans' home, honorably discharged veterans are given a preference.

**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 bill makes several important changes that clarify who we may serve in our programs, changes the titles of the leaders of our veterans home, and gives greater flexibility in who can be hired for the positions. This will be a positive change to allow the WDVA to provide the best care to veterans.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Jerry Fugich, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Heidi Audette, WDVA.

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