

---

SENATE BILL 5849

---

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Angel, Bailey, Rolfes, Braun, Brown, Sheldon, Pearson, Becker, Fortunato, Wilson, Palumbo, O'Ban, Warnick, and Conway

Read first time 02/22/17. Referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

1 AN ACT Relating to veterans' services; amending RCW 43.60A.100;  
2 adding a new section to chapter 43.41 RCW; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

5 (1) Veterans are national heroes who have made great sacrifices  
6 in their lives for the protection of our nation;

7 (2) Due to the relatively high number of military installations  
8 in our state, as well as the standard of living in our state, many  
9 veterans choose to live in Washington;

10 (3) Many veterans have a need for support services, including  
11 peer-to-peer counseling services. Some veterans need to talk about  
12 their experiences with combat, deployment, or other situations  
13 experienced during their time in the military. Often, there is no  
14 person better prepared to speak with a veteran about his or her  
15 experiences than another veteran;

16 (4) In 2009, the state of Texas created an award winning peer-to-  
17 peer counseling network, called the military veteran peer network. On  
18 a voluntary basis, veterans elect to receive specialized training  
19 about the facilitation of group counseling sessions. After receiving  
20 their training, the volunteers create peer-to-peer support groups in  
21 their local communities;

1 (5) Veterans living in Washington would benefit from a program  
2 that is similar to the military veteran peer network.

3 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.60A.100 and 1991 c 55 s 1 are each amended to  
4 read as follows:

5 The department of veterans affairs, to the extent funds are made  
6 available, shall: (1) Contract with professional counseling  
7 specialists to provide a range of direct treatment services to war-  
8 affected state veterans and to those national guard and reservists  
9 who served in the Middle East, and their family members; (2) provide  
10 additional treatment services to Washington state Vietnam veterans  
11 for posttraumatic stress disorder, particularly for those veterans  
12 whose posttraumatic stress disorder has intensified or initially  
13 emerged due to the war in the Middle East; (3) provide an educational  
14 program designed to train primary care professionals, such as mental  
15 health professionals, about the effects of war-related stress and  
16 trauma; (4) provide informational and counseling services for the  
17 purpose of establishing and fostering peer-support networks  
18 throughout the state for families of deployed members of the reserves  
19 and the Washington national guard; (5) provide for veterans'  
20 families, a referral network of community mental health providers who  
21 are skilled in treating deployment stress, combat stress, and  
22 posttraumatic stress; and (6) offer training and support for  
23 volunteers interested in providing peer-to-peer support to other  
24 veterans.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The legislature finds that:

26 (1) Washington state provides a stated preference for hiring  
27 veterans and provides a scoring preference for hiring and promotional  
28 opportunities to veterans in the form of enhanced test scores;

29 (2) Few agencies outside of law enforcement use tests in hiring  
30 or promotion;

31 (3) Veterans have experience that is broader than law enforcement  
32 and the state can benefit by recruiting people with this experience;

33 (4) Veterans leave service with experience in transportation,  
34 teaching and education, logistics, computer technology, health care,  
35 media and communications, construction and engineering, and  
36 administrative support;

37 (5) Many state agencies and other public employers are struggling  
38 to fill and retain employees in key positions;

1 (6) Many public and private employers have developed veteran  
2 hiring and recruitment programs that take advantage of the broad  
3 experience that veterans bring to the job market.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.41  
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) The office shall develop a military recruitment program that  
7 targets veterans and gives them credit for their knowledge, skills,  
8 and leadership abilities. In developing the program, the office shall  
9 consult with the department of enterprise services, department of  
10 veteran affairs, and other interested stakeholders. Program  
11 development must include, but is not limited to, identifying: (a)  
12 Public and private military recruitment programs and ways those  
13 programs can be used in Washington; (b) similar military and state  
14 job classes and develop a system to provide veterans with experience  
15 credit for similar work; and (c) barriers to state employment and  
16 opportunities to better utilize veterans experience.

17 (2) The office shall report to the legislature with a draft plan  
18 by January 1, 2018, that includes draft bill language if necessary.

--- END ---