

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1939

As Reported by House Committee On:
Housing, Community Development & Veterans

Title: An act relating to housing and supportive services for homeless and at-risk veterans in rural areas.

Brief Description: Concerning housing and supportive services for homeless and at-risk veterans in rural areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Steele, Chapman, Reeves and Valdez.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Community Development & Veterans: 2/12/19, 2/19/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to provide outreach, resources, and housing for rural homeless and at-risk veterans.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Jenkin, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Entenman, Frame, Leavitt and Reeves.

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7150).

Background:

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) administers veterans' benefits provided by the state. These benefit programs include the Veterans' Innovations Program, state veterans' homes, counseling services, and several housing assistance programs.

Each county is authorized to establish a Veterans Assistance Program (VAP) to provide services for indigent veterans and their families. The VAPs receive a portion of their funding

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through the county's regular property tax levy. The county may delegate administration of the VAP to another entity through a grant, contract, or interlocal agreement.

Summary of Bill:

The WDVA must establish a program to provide outreach and resources for rural homeless and at-risk veterans in need of emergency and transitional housing and related resources. The program must include counties with significant populations in rural areas that are remotely located from emergency or transitional housing.

The program must include the following services:

- outreach services to identify and locate homeless or at-risk veterans within each rural county;
- transportation services to emergency or transitional housing programs;
- housing at an emergency shelter or transitional housing program;
- supportive services and housing case management; and
- working with veterans to ensure access to all federal benefits.

In developing and implementing services, the WDVA must work with each county's VAP, other state and local agencies, community groups, and federal veteran homeless housing programs. The WDVA may provide housing for a homeless or at-risk veteran for up to two years and is authorized to issue housing vouchers or contract with emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2019.

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 attempts to address severe veterans' issues and gaps in services in rural eastern Washington. It seeks to keep the promises made to veterans.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The WDVA knows this model works because these services are already being provided with state and federal funds. The bill will help veterans get their benefits. The WDVA already provides housing grants in some areas, but the current grant program does not work for some nonprofit housing providers. This bill allows the WDVA to work with additional housing providers and help veterans with needed supportive services.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Reeves.

(Other) Mary Forbes, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.