

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 5323

C 327 L 23
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning the department of veterans affairs.

Sponsors: Senators MacEwen, Conway, Lovick, Mullet and Randall; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Senate Committee on State Government & Elections

House Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans

Background: Veterans' Homes. The Washington Department of Veterans' Affairs (WDVA) operates four veterans' homes, open to eligible veterans—the Washington Soldiers' Home in Orting; the Washington Veterans' Home in Retsil; the Spokane Veterans' Home; and the Walla Walla Veterans' Home. The Washington Soldiers' Colony in Orting no longer has any residents and is no longer funded. The Domiciliary Program has been discontinued and replaced with the Transitional Housing Program, which focuses on transitions back into the community.

Director of Nursing Services. WDVA may establish director of nursing positions at veterans' homes, which are currently classified under the Washington Management Service (WMS). WMS is a separate personnel system for managers within the executive branch of state government. Agencies determine if a position is appropriate for WMS. State civil service law governs the appointment, promotion, transfer, layoff, removal, discipline, and other personnel matters of most state agency employees.

Disclosure of Veteran Discharge Papers. The Public Records Act (PRA), enacted in 1972 as part of Initiative 276, requires all state and local government agencies to make all public records available for public inspection and copying, unless certain statutory exemptions apply. Over 500 specific references in the PRA or other statutes remove certain information from application of the PRA, provide exceptions to public disclosure and copying of certain information, or designate certain information as confidential. The provisions requiring public records disclosure must be interpreted liberally, while the exemptions are interpreted narrowly to effectuate the general policy favoring disclosure.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

DD-214 forms and other armed forces separation documents are exempt from public disclosure requirements when held by county auditors. Under current law, however, discharge documents filed with WDVA are not exempt from public disclosure requirements.

Summary: Veterans' Homes. Statutory references to the Soldiers' Colony, fundraising for the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home, and a requirement to provide domiciliary and medical care are repealed.

Director of Nursing Services. The director of nursing services position is created at each state veterans' home, and is exempt from civil service provisions. The director of nursing services must be a registered nurse licensed in Washington.

Disclosure of Veteran Discharge Papers. WDVA may, under specific circumstances, exempt the DD-214, NGB Form 22, and other separation documents from public disclosure.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	1
House	96	1

Effective: July 23, 2023