

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5803

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government & Elections, January 16, 2024

Title: An act relating to the recruitment and retention of Washington National Guard members.

Brief Description: Concerning the recruitment and retention of Washington national guard members.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Boehnke, Dozier, Frame, Holy, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Lovick, MacEwen, Mullet, Nobles, Padden, Stanford, Wagoner, Warnick and Wellman; by request of Military Department.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/12/24, 1/16/24 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington National Guard member referral incentive program, which provides a referral bonus of no more than \$500 to Washington National Guard members who make a successful referral.
- Creates the National Guard reenlistment bonus program, which provides a reenlistment bonus to eligible members who extend their term of service in the Washington National Guard.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

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.

Background: The Washington National Guard was first organized in 1855 and is made up of the Washington Army National Guard and the Washington Air National Guard. Headquartered at Camp Murray, Washington, the Washington National Guard is made up of approximately 8400 citizen soldiers and airmen. The Washington National Guard is overseen by the Washington Military Department (WMD), and at the call of the Governor, will mobilize and deploy during times of state emergency to augment local jurisdictions and responders in their duties. The Washington National Guard is also subject to the call of the U.S. President to serve as part of the U.S. military.

Summary of Bill: Washington National Guard Member Referral Incentive Program. The Washington National Guard member referral incentive program is established to incentivize peer-to-peer recruiting. The program allows for a referral bonus of no more than \$500 to be provided to Washington National Guard members who make a successful referral. In order to make a referral members must use a form provided by the Washington National Guard, which includes the person's name, contact information, and any other information required by WMD.

WMD must keep a record of all referral forms submitted. Upon the completed accession of a referred person, and to the extent sufficient funds are available, WMD will distribute a referral bonus to the member who provided the successful referral. The following members of the Washington National Guard are not eligible for the referral incentive program:

- members serving in command or senior enlisted advisor positions; or
- members assigned recruiting as a primary or additional duty.

National Guard Reenlistment Bonus Program. The adjutant general must establish the reenlistment bonus program to provide a reenlistment bonus to qualified members of the National Guard who extend their term of service in the Washington National Guard. The bonus amount must generally encourage the member's enlistment for a term of two years or more. Bonus payments must be made on a schedule determined and published by WMD. Eligibility is limited to members who are:

- serving satisfactorily as determined by the adjutant general; and
- not eligible for any federal reenlistment bonus.

The adjutant general may determine additional eligibility criteria for the bonus, and must specify all criteria in policy as well as publish any changes. In the event a member receives a bonus and fails to complete the associated term of reenlistment, WMD may seek to recoup a prorated portion of the bonus.

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: The Washington National Guard is having a hard time recruiting new members. This creates a big problem because the National Guard plays such an important role in responding to statewide emergencies. This is model legislation from the National Conference of State Legislatures, and will address a serious problem for our National Guard.

OTHER: Combined there are approximately 8000 soldiers and airmen in the Washington State National Guard. They respond to both national and state emergencies and are vitally important. Recruitment has been a challenge and we know that referral programs that offer financial incentives work. Approximately 125 members would be eligible for these programs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Bret Daugherty, Washington Military Department.

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