
SENATE BILL 5358

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Senators Gildon, Nobles, Conway, Holy, Lovelett, Nguyen, Randall, Torres, Wagoner, Wellman, C. Wilson, and L. Wilson

Read first time 01/13/23. Referred to Committee on State Government & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding veterans' services and programs;
2 amending RCW 43.60A.101; adding new sections to chapter 43.60A RCW;
3 creating a new section; and providing expiration dates.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that it is vital for
6 veterans in their return to our communities to have adequate
7 community supports. Local programs that connect veterans with their
8 federal benefits and with other veterans for peer support are crucial
9 components of that structure. It is the intent of the legislature
10 through this act to enhance state funding of these programs to ensure
11 they are robust and widely available throughout the state.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
13 RCW to read as follows:

14 (1) By September 30, 2024, the department must submit a report to
15 the legislature on the veterans service officer program authorized in
16 RCW 43.60A.230 to determine the effectiveness of the program in
17 meeting the needs of veterans in the state. The report must include
18 the number of veterans receiving services from the program, the
19 location of such services, and an analysis of areas of the state that
20 are lacking these services. The report must also include

1 recommendations for how to phase in an expansion of these services to
2 these areas.

3 (2) This section expires December 31, 2024.

4 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.60A.101 and 2017 c 192 s 5 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1) By ((December 31, 2018)) September 30, 2024, the department
7 ((of veterans affairs)) must submit a report to the legislature on
8 the veteran peer-to-peer training and support program authorized in
9 RCW 43.60A.100 to determine the effectiveness of the program in
10 meeting the needs of veterans in the state. The report must include
11 the number of veterans receiving peer-to-peer support and the
12 location of such support services; the number of veterans trained
13 through the program to provide peer-to-peer support; and the types of
14 training and support services provided by the program. The report
15 must also include an analysis of ((peer-to-peer training and support
16 programs developed by other states, as well as in the private and
17 nonprofit sectors, in order to evaluate best practices for
18 implementing and managing the veteran peer-to-peer training and
19 support program authorized in RCW 43.60A.100)) areas of the state
20 that do not have these support services and are in need of these
21 services, including recommendations for how to phase in an expansion
22 of these services to these areas.

23 (2) This section expires December 31, 2024.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
25 RCW to read as follows:

26 It is the intent of the legislature to double state
27 appropriations for veterans service officer and peer mentoring
28 programs with this act. As a result, and subject to the availability
29 of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department
30 shall provide grants to counties of the state in order to develop or
31 expand veterans service officer programs, peer-to-peer support
32 programs, and other services and programs to assist veterans in areas
33 where these programs and services are needed. In distributing these
34 grants, the department must prioritize counties with smaller
35 populations and counties that are below the national average in the

1 percentage of veterans receiving federal disability or pension
2 compensation.

--- END ---