

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5275

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As of February 9, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to health insurance for enlisted members of the Washington national guard.

**Brief Description:** Offering health insurance premiums to members of the national guard.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hobbs, Kline, Carrell, Swecker, Shin, McAuliffe and Kilmer.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/05/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

**Background:** The Washington Army National Guard is composed of both Army National Guard and Air National Guard units for the state of Washington. The history of the Washington Army National Guard dates back to 1854 with the formation of the Washington Territorial Militia. Currently, there are more than 8,500 soldiers, airmen, and civilian employees of the Washington National Guard.

A member of the Washington Army National Guard may receive benefits such as a conditional scholarship loan forgiveness program for recipients who complete contracted terms of service; base privileges; and life, vehicle, medical, and dental insurance plan options at low cost. When a guard member is "on orders" and receives an injury due to service, full medical coverage is provided. Otherwise, members are responsible for their own health insurance coverage. Ninety days prior to deployment, a member receives full medical and dental coverage through the Tri-Care system.

**Summary of Bill:** The bill as referred to committee not considered.

**Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute):** All enlisted members of grade E1 through E4 of the Washington National Guard who reenlist after August 1, 2009, for a minimum period of three years must be eligible for additional compensation from the state of Washington in the form of payment of the monthly premium for the eligible member for a qualified premium-based dental plan.

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The state of Washington must select the qualified premium-based dental plan.

This additional compensation must be paid for the period of the reenlistment.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 26, 2009.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: A lot of men and women in the National Guard especially the junior enlisted don't have the jobs that provide health insurance. Many are college students and just don't have access to dental care. One of the major reasons our soldiers don't deploy is for dental reasons. The National Guard Association of Washington supports this bill. Some soldiers may not meet deployment standards because of dental health. This bill provides an incentive for re-enlistment.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Steve Hobbs, Senator; John P. Carpenter, National Guard Association of Washington; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition.