

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6342

As Amended by House, March 8, 2010

Title: An act relating to the Washington soldiers' home.

Brief Description: Concerning the Washington soldiers' home.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker, Hobbs, Franklin, Carrell, McDermott, Pridemore, Marr, Shin and Fairley; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/26/10, 1/28/10 [DPS, DNP].
Passed Senate: 2/10/10, 47-0; 3/08/10, 47-0.
Passed House: 3/03/10, 98-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6342 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; McDermott, Pridemore and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Roach, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Edward Redmond (786-7471)

Background: The Washington Soldier's Home (WSH), located in the city of Orting, was dedicated by the Legislature in May 1891, to provide eligible military veterans necessary personal and nursing care, shelter, and related services. The WSH campus comprises 188 acres of property and houses 38 buildings, including the Garfield Barracks. The Garfield Barracks, built in 1917, is the oldest building on campus and has not been used since 1980.

The Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs (WSDVA) has administrative authority over WSH.

Summary of Substitute Bill: WSDVA is authorized to work with public or private entities on projects that utilize the property and facilities of WSH. Such projects include, but are not

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limited to, renovation and long-term lease of the Garfield Barracks building on campus. Long-term leases are subject to state agency real estate regulations under RCW 43.82.010 with the exception that the lease of WSH property may run for up to 75 years. The Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs must approve a final proposal prior to the commencement of any project. No state funds may be expended in connection with such projects.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: We are asking for a lease opportunity to engage the not-for-profit entities in order to use their money, federal tax opportunities, etc. to renovate the Garfield Barracks. We are unsure of the total costs, but in order to get the not-for-profits to the table, we need to have the 75-year lease authority. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs is entering into similar leases of up to 99 years. Right now we are just asking for authority to negotiate the 75-year lease. We will deal with the program later.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Swecker, prime sponsor; John Lee, WSDVA.

House Amendment(s): Removes the requirement that the Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs approve final proposals for lease term, if applicable, and development plans for any project undertaken. Removes the stipulation that no state funds may be expended in connection with any project undertaken.