

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1537

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### As Passed Legislature

**Title:** An act relating to a veteran's preference for the purpose of public employment.

**Brief Description:** Addressing a veteran's preference for the purpose of public employment.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Representatives O'Ban, Angel, Hayes, Green, Zeiger, Bergquist, Johnson, Ryu, Morrell and Shea).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Government Operations & Elections: 2/13/13, 2/21/13 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 3/13/13, 97-0.

Passed Senate: 4/12/13, 48-0.

Passed Legislature.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Authorizes veterans to claim a preference in public employment upon receipt of separation orders.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Taylor, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Carlyle, Fitzgibbon, Kristiansen, Manweller, Orwall and Van De Wege.

**Staff:** Jasmine Vasavada (786-7301).

**Background:**

Honorably discharged veterans receive a preference in public employment, upon separation from the military. In all competitive examinations for state and local public employment

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other than promotional examinations, veterans with a passing score are given bonus points in the form of an added percentage. The percentage varies based on the veteran's status:

Status	Preference
served during a period of war or armed conflict and has not received military retirement:	10 percent
served during a period of war or armed conflict and is receiving military retirement:	5 percent
did not serve during a period of war or armed conflict:	5 percent
was called to active military service from employment with the state or any of its political subdivisions:	5 percent, and applies to promotional examinations until the first promotion

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The substitute bill authorizes veterans to claim and receive the preference in public employment before actual separation from the military, upon receipt of separation orders indicating an honorable discharge. The preference status becomes permanent upon actual separation.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Many veterans would like to return home to Washington. The preference in public employment is a practical way to ease the transition of veterans into the civilian workforce. This bill accelerates that job search and grants the preference to veterans at the time they most need it, when they are planning their return to the civilian workforce but not yet separated from the military. It will help reduce the likelihood that veterans newly returned from service overseas will be on the unemployment line. It also awards the highest preference to those who have served in war, regardless of whether they have received a military retirement. In some parts of the state that are home to military bases and home to many veterans, thousands are out of work and others have given up hope of finding jobs. The willingness of young people to serve the nation is directly related to how they perceive veterans are being treated, to paraphrase George Washington. When a wartime veteran retires with the aspiration of becoming a police officer or other public servant, the veteran may have discharge orders in hand but find him or herself disadvantaged in competitive examinations, relative to those who never have served in a time of war but already qualify for a 5 percent preference. The gap in time between receipt of separation orders and actual discharge further lengthens a hiring process that already can be drawn out, with background investigations and other hurdles. Spouses of veterans killed in Washington are often

overlooked in legislative efforts to help veterans. When a soldier is killed in action, his or her spouse is left to find something to live for, and sometimes is left in dire need of a way to make ends meet. A preference in competitive examinations would be easy to implement and incredibly valuable to the surviving spouse as well.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative O'Ban, prime sponsor; Representative Angel; Keith Ciancio; Dick Marcelynas, Veterans Legislative Coalition; and Bonnie W. Ward.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.