

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2781

As Reported By House Committee On:

Appropriations

Title: An act relating to veterans' benefits.

Brief Description: Providing for veterans' preferences.

Sponsors: Representatives Basich, Regala, Conway, Reams, Grant, Elliot, Quall, Linville, Chandler, Hatfield, D. Sommers, Scheuerman, Stevens, McMahan, Buck, Sheldon, Tokuda, Poulsen, Cole, Chopp, Kessler, Costa, Thompson, D. Schmidt, Robertson and Cooke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 1/29/96, 2/3/96 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 30 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Beeksma; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; Dellwo; Dyer; Foreman; Grant; Hargrove; Hickel; Jacobsen; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Jennifer Priddy (786-7118).

Background: For purposes of seeking certain benefits through retirement systems, personnel systems, and license and property tax benefits, a veteran is currently defined to include military and certain civilian personnel serving in World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, the Vietnam era, and any other declared war.

For purposes of seeking employment with the state or its political subdivisions, a scoring preference is given to a veteran in the examination process until his or her first employment appointment, as follows:

- 1) 10 percent for a veteran who is not receiving veteran's benefits; or,
- 2) 5 percent for a veteran who is receiving veteran's benefits.

In addition, a veteran who was employed by the state or a political subdivision and was called to active military service for a period of one year or more receives a 5 percent scoring preference on his or her first promotional examination.

Examination scoring preferences are available to a veteran for eight years after his or her release from service.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The definition of veteran is amended to include persons who served in the Persian Gulf War and other armed conflicts (Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and Haiti).

For purposes of civil service examinations, the definition of veteran will also include any person who has served 180 days of active duty not for training, who was not dishonorably discharged. The civil service scoring preference scheme is amended: a 10 percent preference is provided for a veteran who served in a combat zone and is receiving no military retirement benefits; a scoring preference may be added in the first promotional examination if such a veteran was called to military service from employment with the state or political subdivision. A 5 percent scoring preference is provided to a veteran who did not serve in a combat zone, or who is receiving military retirement benefits; a scoring preference may be added in the first promotional examination if such a veteran was called to military service from employment with the state or political subdivision. Veteran examination scoring preferences are extended for two years, for a total of ten years, after a veteran's release from service.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Clarifying amendments are made and the structure of act is changed. The definition of armed conflict is narrowed to include the crisis in Lebanon, the invasion of Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and Haiti.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Veterans of the Persian Gulf War and armed conflicts should receive the benefits due to all previous veterans. The bill (in its original form) provides a flexible definition of veteran; therefore, the Legislature will not be required to update the statute for each new armed conflict or war. The definition of veteran should be expanded to include merchant mariners who have received campaign ribbons, as they were subject to the same dangers as the other armed forces.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: A.J. Bergeron, Director, Department of Veteran's Affairs; and Lawrence Jacobson.