

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1654

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, March 30, 1999

Title: An act relating to veterans.

Brief Description: Revising definition of veteran.

Sponsors: Representatives Kessler and Hatfield.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 3/30/99 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Honeyford, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Long, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Thibaudeau, West, Winsley, Wojahn and Zarelli.

Staff: Pete Cutler (786-7454)

Background: Current statute provides that a person who served during World War II as a U.S. documented merchant mariner or as a crewmember aboard a U.S. army or naval transport vessel is considered a veteran for purposes of certain state benefits. This definition is used for defining a member's eligibility for military service credit in the Public Employee Retirement System, Plan 1 (PERS 1), and for a veteran's preference in public employment. Current statute provides that a person will be considered a veteran if he served as a merchant mariner between December 7, 1941, and August 15, 1945.

Federal legislation was passed in 1998 that lengthened the official time period for qualifying as a World War II veteran for service with the merchant marine or a U.S. army or naval transport service vessel. The eligible period was extended from August 15, 1945, to December 31, 1946.

Summary of Bill: The definition of a WWII merchant marine veteran and an army and navy transport civil service veteran is altered to no longer include the requirement that the veteran served during an armed conflict, and the dates of service are lengthened from August 15, 1945, to December 31, 1946, to be consistent with the 1998 amendment to the federal definition.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Making this change would demonstrate the state's respect and appreciation for those persons who risked their lives serving in the merchant marine during WWII.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Rep. Lynn Kessler, prime sponsor; Harold Schmidt.