

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6507

As of February 7, 2012

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Title: An act relating to creating the Walla Walla state veterans' home.

Brief Description: Establishing the Walla Walla state veterans' home.

Sponsors: Senators Hewitt, Kilmer, Swecker, Shin and Roach; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/31/12, 2/02/12 [DP].

Ways & Means: 2/06/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pridemore, Chair; Prentice, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Chase and Nelson.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Megan Atkinson (786-7446)

Background: The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs is divided into three divisions: administrative services, state veterans homes, and veteran services.

Three state veteran homes – the Washington Soldiers Home and Colony at Orting, the Washington Veterans Home, and the Spokane Veterans Home – provide long-term health care for honorably discharged veterans and in some instances, their spouses, who are disabled and indigent or likely to become indigent due to the cost of their health care.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Spokane Veterans Home opened October 1, 2001, and has 100 skilled level nursing beds. The Soldiers Home at Orting was opened in 1891 and has a residential capacity of 183. The Colony designed to serve eligible veterans and their families residing in the Orting School District was added in 1905; the Colony has a capacity of 24 members. The Washington Veterans Home in Retsil, was opened in 1910; current resident capacity is 262. The Orting and Retsil homes provide three levels of care: domiciliary, assisted-living, and skilled nursing.

Summary of Bill: A branch of the state soldiers' home under the name of the Walla Walla State Veterans' Home must be established and maintained in this state.

The act takes effect upon certification by the Director of the Office of Financial Management (OFM) that sufficient and specific funding has been provided by June 30, 2012. A notice of certification must be filed with the Code Reviser for publication in the State Register.

If a certificate is not filed by the Director of the OFM by June 30, 2012, this act is null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Upon certification by the Director of OFM, if a certificate is not filed by the Director of OFM by June 30, 2012, the act is null and void.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections): PRO: This is a good bill, and the City of Walla Walla, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Veterans Legislative Coalition all endorse it. The plans are all prepared. The federal government has allocated the funds, and all we need now is state-matching funds and we can break ground. The last Veterans home opened in the state in 2001, and the need is there.

Persons Testifying (Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections): PRO: Jerry Cummins, City of Walla Walla; John Lee, Director of Department of Veterans Affairs; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Dave Mastin, Port of Walla Walla.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This veterans' home will be a long-term care facility for nursing facility level of care and will be mostly focused on rehabilitation and short-term stays. The majority of the residents are projected to be service-related stays and as a result will be federally funded. The Eastern Washington veterans community is very underserved, and this home is needed.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Alfie Alvarado, WA State Dept. of Veterans' Affairs; Jims Sims, Veterans Legislative Coalition.