

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2095

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, APRIL 4, 1991

Brief Description: Establishing a counseling network for veterans and their families.

SPONSORS: House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives R. Johnson, McLean, Anderson, Jones, Kremen, Braddock, Valle, Wineberry, Franklin, Day, Pruitt, Rayburn, Roland, Spanel and Prentice; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Bluechel, Gaspard, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Metcalf, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Owen, Rinehart, L. Smith, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Judy Fitzgerald (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: April 2, 1991; April 4, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Individuals exposed to armed conflict in a war situation sometimes suffer long-term psychological and social disorders. Family members of these individuals may suffer stress and trauma as well. Members of the armed services may seek professional counseling and care through the military. Members of the military reserves and the National Guard lose access to many federal counseling programs as soon as they leave active duty.

For several years, the state Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been coordinating a program for treatment of Viet Nam veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). VA reports an increase in incidence of PTSD in Viet Nam veterans concurrent with the conflict in the Persian Gulf.

SUMMARY:

The Department of Veterans Affairs will contract with professional counselors to provide an option of direct mental health treatment for war-affected veterans, for soldiers returning from the Persian Gulf, and for their families. VA will expand its existing counseling program for Viet Nam veterans. VA will also work to train mental health

professionals about the effects of war-related stress and trauma, and will provide other mental health support services to veterans and their families. VA will coordinate its programs with federal programs and other mental health programs to minimize duplication of services.

Appropriations: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

TESTIMONY FOR:

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychological result of exposure to the trauma of war. PTSD is an invasive disorder and affects veterans' families as well as veterans themselves. This bill would provide clear legislative direction to the department in serving veterans and their families and training professionals in the treatment of PTSD.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: PRO: Rep. Rob Johnson; Jesse Farias, Director, Department of Veterans' Affairs; Keith Sherman, Veterans' Association