

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 2754

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Creating the veterans innovations program.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Morrell, Campbell, Green, Haigh, Appleton, Kilmer, Darneille, Cox, Ormsby, Haler, Chase, P. Sullivan, McCoy, Wallace, Sells, Serben, Curtis, Moeller, Blake, Cody, Kenney, Conway, Ericks, Clibborn, Kessler, Simpson and Linville).

**House Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections**

**Background:**

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a variety of services to veterans, including assistance with finding employment, submitting entitlement claims, managing long-term health care, obtaining counseling for post-traumatic stress syndrome, and addressing other needs specific to veterans.

**Summary:**

The Veterans Innovations Program (VIP) is created within the Department of Veterans Affairs (Department). The purpose of the VIP is to provide assistance, in addition to that offered by the Department, to those veterans who have returned to their families and communities after serving in recent military action. The Department may receive gifts, grants, or endowments from public or private sources made for the use and purposes of the VIP. The VIP is terminated on June 30, 2016.

Two separate programs are created within the VIP: the Defenders' Fund Program and the Competitive Grant Program. The Defenders' Fund Program is administered by the Department and allows members of the National Guard and Reservists who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Noble Eagle to receive a one-time financial hardship grant of no more than \$500 related to employment, education, housing, and health care. The Competitive Grant Program is created to fund innovative initiatives to provide crisis and emergency relief, education, training, and employment assistance to veterans and their families in their communities.

A seven-member board (Board) is created to administer the Competitive Grant Program. The members are appointed by the Governor, must have recognized experience in serving veterans and their families in the areas targeted by the Competitive Grant Program, and may not participate in any Board decision that would create a direct or indirect conflict of interest for that Board member. The Board must establish a competitive process to solicit proposals and

prioritize project applications for potential funding. On January 1, 2007, the Board must submit a report on the implementation of the act to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature and to the Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs.

The VIP Account is created in the state treasury. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation.

Washington National Guard and Reservist veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Noble Eagle, and the veterans' spouses and children, are given priority when applying for enrollment in the Washington basic health plan.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	98	0	
Senate	46	0	(Senate amended)
House	98	0	(House concurred)

**Effective:** June 7, 2006