

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2130

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 27, 2014

Title: An act relating to the veterans innovations program.

Brief Description: Concerning the veterans innovations program.

Sponsors: Representatives MacEwen, Orwall, Morrell, Seaquist, Haler, Appleton, Ross, Stanford, Green, Van De Wege, Ormsby and Freeman; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/14/14, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/27/14 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Conway, Dandel, McCoy and Rivers.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: In 2006 the Legislature established the Veterans' Innovations Program (VIP) within the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) to provide crisis and emergency relief as well as education, training, and employment assistance to veterans and their families.

Two separate programs were created within VIP: the Defenders' Fund Program and the Competitive Grant Program. The Defenders' Fund Program allows recent veterans to receive a one-time financial hardship grant of up to \$500 for employment, education, housing, or health care costs. The Competitive Grant Program provides grants to three different types of projects aimed at assisting veterans and their families:

- crisis and emergency relief;
- education, training, and employment assistance; and
- community outreach and resources.

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.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The Defenders' Fund and the Competitive Grant Program within VIP are abolished. Funds appropriated to VIP must be used by WDVA to:

- increase awareness of VIP amongst veterans and active duty service members;
- develop partnerships to assist applicants in completing the VIP application; and
- support veterans and active duty service members in crisis and emergency relief, as well as education, training, and employment assistance.

The provisions that sunset VIP on June 30, 2016, are removed.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The provisions that sunset VIP on June 30, 2016, are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on House Bill: PRO: This bill also expands VIP to National Guard members. This will streamline the application process for veterans, allow transparency, and make administration of the program easier for staff. The Veterans Legislative Coalition supports this bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative MacEwen, prime sponsor; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Heidi Audette, WDVA.