

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2582

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### As Passed Legislature

**Title:** An act relating to the department of veterans affairs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the department of veterans affairs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Reeves, Johnson, Kilduff, MacEwen, McBride and Eslick; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 1/17/18, 1/18/18 [DP].

##### **Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/7/18, 98-0.

Passed Senate: 2/27/18, 49-0.

Passed Legislature.

#### **Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires that the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Deputy Director and assistant directors, rather than all assistants and executive staff, hired by the Director be veterans.
- Changes the title of the managers of the state veterans homes to "administrator."
- Requires the WDVA to provide a hiring preference to honorably discharged veterans when hiring administrators for state veterans homes.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; McCabe, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jenkin, Reeves and Sawyer.

**Staff:** Kirsten Lee (786-7133).

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*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.*

**Background:**

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) provides many services and benefits to veterans and their families, including: counseling, employment, education, training, burial, housing, medical care, and relief programs. The Director of the WDVA (Director) conducts, controls, and supervises the WDVA. The Director also holds the power to appoint and employ personnel for the WDVA, including assistants and executive staff. The Director is required to designate a deputy from the executive staff to supervise the WDVA in his or her absence. The Director and all appointed assistants and executive staff must be veterans.

The WDVA operates four state veterans homes: the Washington Veterans Home located in Port Orchard; the Washington Soldiers Home located in Orting; the Spokane Veterans Home located in Spokane; and the Walla Walla Veterans Home located in Walla Walla. Veterans with an honorable discharge who reside in the state, and their spouses or domestic partners, are eligible to apply for admission to a state veterans home. The veterans homes provide both domiciliary and nursing care. The Director must appoint a superintendent to manage each state veterans home. Each superintendent must be licensed by the Department of Health (DOH) as a nursing home administrator.

**Summary of Bill:**

The WDVA Deputy Director and assistant directors appointed by the Director, rather than all assistants and executive staff, must be veterans.

The title of the individual appointed to manage each state veterans home is "Administrator," rather than "Superintendent," consistent with the requirement that the individual be a nursing home administrator licensed by the DOH.

When hiring an administrator for a state veterans' home, honorably discharged veterans are given a preference.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The WDVA has done a great job of caring for our veterans. There is no military occupational specialty for nursing home administrators, so those coming out of the service do not have this specific type of experience for the position of a nursing home administrator. Washington is the only state to require the superintendent of a state veterans home to be a veteran. By changing the requirement that the administrator no longer has to be a veteran, there is a better opportunity for the WDVA to hire the most qualified persons for the job in order to provide the best care for veterans. There are many new Medicaid and Medicare

regulations, so it is important that the administrators hired have a deep understanding of the new regulations to keep the state veterans homes moving in the right direction.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Reeves, prime sponsor; Heidi Audette, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs; Jerry Fugich and Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.