

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 2701

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Addressing the definition of veteran.

Sponsors: House Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Holy, Klippert, Stonier, Lytton, Maycumber, Muri, McDonald and Ortiz-Self; by request of LEOFF Plan 2 Retirement Board).

House Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Veteran Status. The state provides certain benefits to persons based on their status as a military service veteran. Veteran status generally is recognized for a service member who received an honorable discharge or other excusable discharge. Benefits for such general service status include, among others: free license plate decals; admission to state soldiers' and veterans' homes; veterans' scoring preference on civil service exams; veteran homeownership down payment assistance programs; and certain services administered by the state Department of Veterans Affairs.

A separate status is recognized for veterans who served in a period of war or conflict. Such combat veterans are eligible to receive additional benefits, including, but not limited to: higher scoring preference on civil service exams; participation in a designated shared leave pool program; special designated license plates; and property tax relief for senior widows of veterans. In addition, the state-sponsored retirement systems provide credit for interruptive military service, for up to five years of service. The employee's contributions are waived if the interruptive service occurred during a period of a war or conflict that qualifies under the state definition for combat veteran status.

Veteran Definition. The definition for a combat veteran includes a veteran who received an honorable discharge, or is actively serving honorably and has either: (1) served in a period of war; or (2) received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) for combat in a foreign territory. The Department of Defense has designated certain conflicts under which service

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qualifies for the AFEM. In addition to the AFEM, certain conflicts also qualify for specific medals of participation.

A period of war includes World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, the Vietnam era, the Persian Gulf War, and any future period that includes a congressional declaration of war. A period of war also covers certain armed conflicts where the participant has been awarded a campaign badge or medal. Such conflicts include: the crisis in Lebanon; the invasion of Grenada; Operation Just Cause (Panama); Operation Restore Hope (Somalia); Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti); Operation Joint Endeavor (Bosnia); Operation Noble Eagle; Operation Enduring Freedom (southern or central Asia); and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Persian Gulf).

2017 Veteran Definition Study. In 2017 the Legislature directed the Law Enforcement Officers' and Firefighters' Plan 2 Retirement Board (LEOFF 2 Board) to study extending the interruptive service credit for employees whose interruptive service occurred during a qualifying period of war or conflict, but who did not receive a campaign badge or medal. Based on the study, the LEOFF 2 Board recommended legislation to amend the qualifying periods of war or conflict within the definition of a combat veteran.

Summary:

For purposes of service during a period of war, the combat veteran definition includes service that would otherwise qualify for a badge or medal, except that the member already received a badge or medal for prior service during the same conflict. In addition, the period of war designated for the end of the Persian Gulf War is February 28, 1991; or November 30, 1995, if the veteran received any badge or medal for that period. Finally, certain conflicts are added to the listed conflicts that qualify as a period of war, including Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq and Syria), and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (Afghanistan).

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0
Senate	48	0

Effective: June 7, 2018