

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 1448

C 223 L 19
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the veterans service officer program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Maycumber, Chapman, Lovick, Gildon, Reeves, Volz, Steele, Kilduff, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Boehnke, McCaslin, Macri, Irwin, Corry, Klippert, MacEwen, Riccelli, Eslick, Leavitt, Dye, Ryu, Smith, Stokesbary, Chambers, DeBolt, Slatter, Jenkin, Barkis, Cody, Schmick, Kretz, Tharinger, Van Werven, Orwall, Sells, Sutherland, Stanford, Ormsby and Jinkins).

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

Background:

Veterans service officers (VSOs) assist veterans and their families with claims for federal veterans benefits. Veterans service officers may work for the state, a county, a tribal government, or a private organization. In some counties VSOs are funded through local veterans assistance programs, which are established to provide relief and assistance to indigent veterans. County veterans assistance programs receive funding through a portion of the county's regular property tax levy.

In order for a VSO to represent a veteran in his or her benefits claims, the VSO must undergo a formal application and training process and be accredited by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) facilitates the accreditation process for VSOs and currently assists local governments and organizations funding their own VSOs in this process.

Summary:

The Veterans Service Officer Program (Program) is created within the WDVA to provide funding for underserved counties to establish and maintain a VSO. Underserved counties are defined as those with populations of 100,000 or less.

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.

Subject to the availability of appropriated funds, the WDVA is required to:

- educate local governments, veterans, and members of the National Guard or Armed Forces Reserves about the Program;
- develop partnerships with and provide funding to counties establishing and maintaining local accredited VSOs; and
- develop an application process for the Program.

The WDVA may provide funding for no more than one full-time equivalent VSO per eligible county.

The Veterans Service Officer Fund (Fund) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. Revenues to the Fund may consist of appropriations by the Legislature, private contributions, and other deposits. Funds are awarded to counties on a first-come, first-served basis.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0
Senate	46	0

Effective: July 28, 2019