
**Housing, Community Development &
Veterans Committee**

HB 1939

Brief Description: Concerning housing and supportive services for homeless and at-risk veterans in rural areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Steele, Chapman, Reeves and Valdez.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to provide outreach, resources, and housing for rural homeless and at-risk veterans.

Hearing Date: 2/12/19

Staff: Serena Dolly (786-7150).

Background:

The Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) administers veterans' benefits provided by the state. These benefit programs include the Veterans' Innovations Program, state veterans' homes, counseling services, and several housing assistance programs.

Each county is authorized to establish a Veterans Assistance Program (VAP) to provide services for indigent veterans and their families. VAPs receive a portion of the funding through the county's regular property tax levy. The county may delegate administration of the VAP to another entity through a grant, contract, or interlocal agreement.

Summary of Bill:

The WDVA must establish a program to provide outreach and resources for rural homeless and at-risk veterans in need of emergency and transitional housing and related resources. The

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program must include counties with significant populations in rural areas that are remotely located from emergency or transitional housing.

The program must include the following services:

- outreach services to identify and locate homeless or at-risk veterans within each rural county;
- transportation services to emergency or transitional housing programs;
- housing at an emergency shelter or transitional housing program;
- supportive services and housing case management; and
- working with veterans to ensure access to all federal benefits.

In developing and implementing services, the WDVA must work with each county's VAP, other state and local agencies, community groups, and federal veteran homeless housing programs. The WDVA may provide housing for a homeless or at-risk veteran for up to two years and is authorized to issue housing vouchers or contract with emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 11, 2019.

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