
**Housing, Community Development &
Veterans Committee**

SSB 5900

Brief Description: Promoting access to earned benefits and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer veterans.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Randall, Wilson, C., Takko, Saldaña, Van De Wege, Salomon, Liias, Das, Pedersen and Nguyen).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator within the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hearing Date: 2/21/20

Staff: Cassie Jones (786-7303).

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is a state agency created in 1975. The powers and duties of the DVA include cooperating with local governments and the federal government, particularly regarding participation in federal grants-in-aid programs relating to veterans and veterans affairs. The DVA provides many services to veterans and their families, including medical care, assistance with claims for benefits, estate management, counseling, and financial assistance. The DVA assists veterans with education, training, and employment.

Summary of Bill:

The position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer coordinator (coordinator) is created within DVA. The coordinator's duties include:

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- conducting outreach to, and providing assistance designed for the unique needs of, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) veterans, and their spouses and dependents;
- assisting LGBTQ veterans in applying for an upgrade to the character of a discharge from service or a change in the narrative reason for a discharge from service;
- assisting LGBTQ veterans, and their spouses and dependents, in applying for benefits; and
- developing and distributing information to LGBTQ veterans, and their spouses and dependents, regarding veterans' benefits and other benefit programs.

DVA must prepare and submit a report to the Governor, the Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, and the appropriate legislative standing committees regarding the implementation and status of the coordinator by December 15, 2021. This report must include the number of veterans served, the type of assistance provided, any recommendations for the improvement and expansion of services provided by the coordinator, and any recommendations for legislative changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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