

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5803

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government & Elections, January 16, 2024
Ways & Means, February 5, 2024

Title: An act relating to the recruitment and retention of Washington National Guard members.

Brief Description: Concerning the recruitment and retention of Washington national guard members.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Boehnke, Dozier, Frame, Holy, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Lovick, MacEwen, Mullet, Nobles, Padden, Stanford, Wagoner, Warnick and Wellman; by request of Military Department.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/12/24, 1/16/24 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 1/29/24, 2/05/24 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Washington National Guard member referral incentive program, which provides a referral bonus of no more than \$500 to Washington National Guard members who make a successful referral.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Staff: Danielle Creech (786-7412)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5803 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital; Nguyen, Vice Chair, Operating; Wilson, L., Ranking Member, Operating; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Rivers, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Billig, Boehnke, Braun, Conway, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Muzzall, Pedersen, Randall, Saldaña, Torres, Van De Wege, Wagoner and Wellman.

Staff: Thomas Meyer (786-7420)

Background: The Washington National Guard was first organized in 1855 and is made up of the Washington Army National Guard and the Washington Air National Guard. Headquartered at Camp Murray, Washington, the Washington National Guard is made up of approximately 8400 citizen soldiers and airmen. The Washington National Guard is overseen by the Washington Military Department (WMD), and at the call of the Governor, will mobilize and deploy during times of state emergency to augment local jurisdictions and responders in their duties. The Washington National Guard is also subject to the call of the U.S. President to serve as part of the U.S. military.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): Washington National Guard Member Referral Incentive Program. The Washington National Guard member referral incentive program is established to incentivize peer-to-peer recruiting. The program allows for a referral bonus of no more than \$500 to be provided to Washington National Guard members who make a successful referral. In order to make a referral members must use a form provided by the Washington National Guard, which includes the person's name, contact information, and any other information required by WMD.

WMD must keep a record of all referral forms submitted. Upon the completed accession of a referred person, and to the extent sufficient funds are available, WMD will distribute a referral bonus to the member who provided the successful referral. The following members of the Washington National Guard are not eligible for the referral incentive program:

- members serving in command or senior enlisted advisor positions; or
- members assigned recruiting as a primary or additional duty.

The adjutant general may determine additional eligibility criteria for the bonus, and must specify all criteria in policy as well as publish any changes.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Removes the reenlistment bonus section of the bill, leaving only the recruiting referral program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (State Government & Elections):

PRO: The Washington National Guard is having a hard time recruiting new members. This creates a big problem because the National Guard plays such an important role in responding to statewide emergencies. This is model legislation from the National Conference of State Legislatures, and will address a serious problem for our National Guard.

OTHER: Combined there are approximately 8000 soldiers and airmen in the Washington State National Guard. They respond to both national and state emergencies and are vitally important. Recruitment has been a challenge and we know that referral programs that offer financial incentives work. Approximately 125 members would be eligible for these programs.

Persons Testifying (State Government & Elections): PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Bret Daugherty, Washington Military Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (State Government & Elections): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Ways & Means): *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.*

PRO: The Washington National Guard is having a hard time recruiting new members. This creates a big problem because the National Guard plays such an important role in responding to statewide emergencies. This is model legislation from the National Conference of State Legislatures, and will address a serious problem for our National Guard.

OTHER: Combined there are approximately 8000 soldiers and airmen in the Washington State National Guard. They respond to both national and state emergencies and are vitally important. Recruitment has been a challenge and we know that referral programs that offer financial incentives work. Approximately 125 members would be eligible for these programs.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor.

OTHER: Jim Baumgart, Washington Military Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.