
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1925

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By House Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Shavers, Leavitt, Ramel, Reed, Simmons, Timmons, Donaghy, Reeves, Riccelli, Davis, and Paul)

READ FIRST TIME 01/18/24.

1 AN ACT Relating to expanding the veterans service officer program
2 to increase veteran support statewide; amending RCW 43.60A.230 and
3 43.60A.235; and adding a new section to chapter 43.60A RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 The department must support veterans by providing information
8 regarding available veterans services. Subject to the availability of
9 amounts appropriated from the veterans service officer fund for the
10 specific purposes provided in this section, the department must:

11 (1) Contact veterans within 90 days of receipt of a discharge
12 notice from the department of defense and provide information about
13 veterans benefits and services;

14 (2) Provide county-specific information on the department website
15 identifying services and resources available to veterans using
16 information provided to the department by county veterans assistance
17 programs and local branches of nationally recognized veterans service
18 organizations; and

19 (3) Beginning December 2025, and every two years thereafter,
20 report to the governor and the appropriate standing committees of the

1 legislature regarding veterans services. The report must include, at
2 a minimum:

3 (a) The number of veterans residing in each county;

4 (b) The number and type of veterans services available in each
5 county;

6 (c) The number of veterans served in the reporting period by the
7 department, veterans service officer program, and counties
8 contracting with the department for veterans services, including the
9 number of veterans served who reside in an adjacent county;

10 (d) The number of claims filed in the reporting period by
11 veterans service organizations contracting with the department;

12 (e) The percentage of veterans served in the reporting period who
13 received service-related disability and nonservice connected
14 veterans' pensions; and

15 (f) Identification of:

16 (i) Each county where the percentage of the veteran population
17 receiving service-related disability and nonservice connected
18 veterans' pensions is below the national average; and

19 (ii) Each county that does not provide access to a veterans
20 service officer through the veterans' assistance program defined in
21 RCW 73.08.005, through a contract with the department, through the
22 veterans service officer program described in RCW 43.60A.230, or
23 directly through the department.

24 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.60A.230 and 2019 c 223 s 1 are each amended to
25 read as follows:

26 (1) There is created in the department the veterans service
27 officer program. The purpose of the veterans service officer program
28 is to provide funding to underserved eligible counties to establish
29 and maintain a veterans service officer within the county. "Eligible
30 counties," for the purposes of this section, means counties with a
31 resident veteran population of (~~one hundred thousand~~) 50,000 or
32 less.

33 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated in the
34 veterans service officer fund under RCW 43.60A.235 for the specific
35 purposes provided in this section, the department must:

36 (a) Establish a process to educate local governments, veterans,
37 and those still serving in the national guard or armed forces reserve
38 of the veterans service officer program;

1 (b) Develop partnerships with local governments to assist in
2 establishing and maintaining local veterans service officers in
3 eligible counties who elect to have a veterans service officer; and

4 (c) Provide funding to support eligible counties in establishing
5 and maintaining local accredited veterans service officers. (~~Funding~~
6 ~~is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding may only be~~
7 ~~provided to support the equivalent of one full-time veterans service~~
8 ~~officer per eligible county.~~) The department shall prioritize
9 additional funding to eligible counties where the percentage of the
10 veteran population receiving federal disability or pension
11 compensation is below the national average, and to eligible counties
12 without a veterans service officer.

13 (3) The application process for the veterans service officer
14 program must be prescribed as to manner and form by the department.

15 (4) The department may adopt rules necessary to implement this
16 section. The department shall include a requirement that any county
17 that participates in the program must allow any veteran residing in
18 an adjacent county access to the county's veteran service officer.

19 (5) For purposes of this section, "veterans service officer"
20 means an accredited veterans service officer funded by the veterans
21 service officer fund created in RCW 43.60A.235.

22 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.60A.235 and 2019 c 223 s 2 are each amended to
23 read as follows:

24 (1) There is created in the custody of the state treasurer an
25 account to be known as the veterans service officer fund. Revenues to
26 the fund consist of appropriations by the legislature, private
27 contributions, and all other sources deposited in the fund.

28 (2) Expenditures from the fund may only be used for the purposes
29 of the veterans service officer program under RCW 43.60A.230 and
30 section 1 of this act, including administrative expenses. Only the
31 director, or the director's designee, may authorize expenditures. The
32 account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW,
33 but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

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