

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4027

*As Reported By House Committee on:
State Government*

Brief Description: Requesting financial relief for disabled veterans.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Winsley, Dorn, Franklin, Jones, Kremen, Wineberry, Sheldon and Sprenkle.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, January 28, 1992, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
STATE GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Pruitt, Vice Chair; McLean, Ranking Minority Member; Bowman, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; R. Fisher; Grant; Moyer; O'Brien; and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda May (786-7135).

Background: Under federal law, individuals who serve in the military for at least 20 years receive military retirement pay based on the longevity of their service. Also under federal law, a veteran who has a service-connected disability receives compensation in proportion to the severity of the disability. However, a veteran with a service-connected disability who has 20 or more years of military service may not receive concurrently both full retirement pay and full disability compensation. A person in this situation may choose to receive full retirement pay, or full disability compensation, or may waive an amount of retirement pay equal to the amount of the disability compensation.

There are several bills before the U.S. Congress which would allow individuals in this situation to receive most or all of their full retirement pay and disability compensation.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature asks Congress to amend federal law to permit career military retirees who have service-connected disabilities to receive concurrently both full retirement pay and full disability compensation.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: This bill is at the request of veterans organizations in Pierce County. Several states have passed similar resolutions, and Washington should be listed among the other states doing this. Under the current system, a person who had served for 19 or 20 years in the military and then lost an arm or a leg in Operation Desert Storm would not receive any higher pay than any other retiree. This is the only retirement system in the country where recipients pay for their disability benefits. Thousands of veterans are faced with funding their own disability payments. There is a small tax advantage on the disability portion of the pay, but that is very small compensation. The bill addresses a baseline equity issue.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Shirley Winsley; Beau Bergeron, Department of Veterans Affairs; and Keith Sherman, Veterans Legislative Coalition.