

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6071

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, February 3, 2004

Title: An act relating to veterans of the Afghanistan conflict and the Persian Gulf War II.

Brief Description: Providing public employment retirement credits and education fee waivers for veterans of the Afghanistan conflict and the Persian Gulf War II.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Sheahan, Jacobsen, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Brandland, Doumit, Hewitt, Eide, Prentice, Kohl-Welles, Oke, Kline, Roach, Finkbeiner, Winsley, Reardon, Fairley, McCaslin, Thibaudeau, Benton, Fraser, Franklin, Regala, Mulliken and Johnson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/2/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6071 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Chair; Hewitt, Vice Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Doumit, Fairley, Fraser, Hale, Honeyford, Johnson, Pflug, Prentice, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Sheahan, B. Sheldon and Winsley.

Staff: Erik Sund (786-7454)

Background: An individual who meets the statutory definition of "veteran" is entitled to certain state benefits. To qualify, a veteran must have served with a branch of the armed forces within one of a number of specified periods of war.

State benefits for veterans include eligibility for a waiver of all or a portion of the tuition and fee increases that have occurred since the 1990-1991 academic year at state institutions of higher education and, if the individual is in the Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 (PERS 1) with at least 25 years of creditable service, credit for up to five years of qualifying military service. Qualifying military service is service within one of a number of specific periods of conflict.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf War II are added to the list of periods of war used to determine whether or not an individual qualifies as a veteran for the purpose of eligibility for PERS 1 service credits and eligibility for tuition waivers that may be granted by public institutions of higher education.

The Persian Gulf War II, which has been concluded, is replaced by Operation Iraqi Freedom, which is ongoing, on the list of conflicts for which PERS 1 members may receive military service credit.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Persian Gulf War II, which has been concluded, is replaced by Operation Iraqi Freedom, which is ongoing, on the list of conflicts for which PERS 1 members may receive military service credit.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: American soldiers are risking their lives in foreign lands to protect our freedom. This is a small token of appreciation that we can give to our veterans at minimal or no cost, and that will ensure the affected veterans will enjoy the same benefits as other veterans.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Paull Shin, prime sponsor (pro); Senator Ken Jacobsen (pro); John Lee, Washington State Department of Veterans' Affairs.