

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6342

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to the Washington soldiers' home.

Brief Description: Concerning the Washington soldiers' home.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker, Hobbs, Franklin, Carrell, McDermott, Pridemore, Marr, Shin and Fairley; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/18/10, 2/19/10 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Authorizes the Department of Veterans' Affairs to work with public or private entities on projects to make the best use of the soldiers' home property and facilities and to extend long-term leases up to 75 years.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Flannigan, Miloscia and Taylor.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

Article 10, section 3 of the state Constitution calls for the Legislature to provide for the maintenance of a soldiers' home for honorably discharged Union soldiers, sailors, marines and members of the state militia disabled while in the line of duty and who are citizens of the state. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) operates the state's three veterans homes: the Spokane Veterans' Home, located in Spokane; the Washington Veterans' Home, located

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

in Retsil; and the Washington Soldiers' Home, located in Orting. Indigent veterans and their spouses or domestic partners are eligible to apply for admission to a state veterans' home. The veterans' homes provide both domiciliary and nursing care.

The Washington Soldiers' Home was established in 1891 with the erection of Washington Barracks. Garfield Barracks was built in 1917. Currently, there are about a dozen buildings on the 181-acre campus.

The Department of General Administration (GA) has the statutory authority to acquire, lease, purchase, and dispose of real estate on behalf of those state agencies that do not have specific statutory authority. The GA may fix the terms and conditions of leases, except that no lease may extend more than 20 years in duration.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The DVA is authorized to work with public or private entities on projects to make the best use of the soldiers' home property and facilities. Projects may include, but are not limited to, the renovation and long-term lease of the Garfield Barracks building. All long-term leases of the soldiers' home property are subject to the requirements of the GA's statutory authority for leasing facilities, except that long-term leases may run for up to 75 years.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The provision requiring that the Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs to approve lease terms and development plans is removed. The provision stipulating that no state funds be expended for projects at the Washington Soldiers' Home is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill presents an opportunity to renovate Garfield Barracks for use as housing for veterans. The 75-year lease is needed to allow non-profit entities to make up for their investments. There is a concern that the Senate amendment stipulating that no state funds be used will preclude funding from the housing trust fund. The Veterans Legislative Coalition is supportive of the bill. This will help homeless veterans by housing them at Garfield Barracks.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Swecker, prime sponsor; John Lee, Washington State Department of Veterans' Affairs; and Dennis Primoli, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.