

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5481

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2009

Title: An act relating to veterans' burials.

Brief Description: Concerning veterans' burials.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Marr, Becker, Hobbs, Haugen, Franklin, Parlette, Eide, Rockefeller, Hatfield, Jarrett, Jacobsen, Kilmer, Berkey, Tom, Swecker, King, Kastama, Shin, McDermott, Prentice, Fairley, Holmquist, Brandland, McCaslin, Ranker, McAuliffe, Roach, Honeyford and Kauffman).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/03/09, 2/09/09 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/03/09, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5481 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, McDermott, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Edward Redmond (786-7471)

Background: A person or entity in lawful possession of unclaimed human remains for a period of 90 days or more may dispose of the remains. The disposition of the unclaimed human remains must be in accordance with the rules adopted by the Washington State Cemetery Board and the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) uses various records and databases to determine whether a decedent is eligible for interment at a state or federal veterans' cemetery. An individual must be a United States veteran discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, a veteran's spouse, or a veterans' dependent child to be eligible for interment at the National Veterans' Cemetery or Washington State Veterans' Cemetery.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Any deceased veteran or veteran's dependant that is left unclaimed for a period of 90 days or longer, and is certified by the DVA as eligible for

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internment at a federal or state veterans' cemetery, must be transferred from the person or entity in possession of such human remains to the custody of the DVA. The person or entity transferring the human remains to the DVA is immune from any liability associated with such transfer. The state, its employees, and agents are also immune from any liability related to the transfer of such human remains to the DVA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: In April 2008 DVA learned that a significant amount of unclaimed veterans remained in the possession of funeral homes and were not given proper military burials. This bill establishes a collaborative process, between DVA and funeral directors, to transfer veterans and provide them with proper burials.

Persons Testifying: PRO: John Lee, Director, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.