

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5958

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs

**Title:** An act relating to providing for representation of the state veterans' homes on the governor's veterans affairs advisory committee.

**Brief Description:** Providing for representation of the state veterans' homes on the governor's veterans affairs advisory committee.

**Sponsors:** Senators Roach, Liias, Benton, McCoy, Angel and Chase; by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs: 3/16/15, 3/19/15 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Bill**  
**(As Amended by Committee)**

- Changes the membership of the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (Committee) and designates liaisons from the Committee for each of the state veterans' homes.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Johnson, Ranking Minority Member; Zeiger, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins, Moscoso and Sawyer.

**Staff:** Sean Flynn (786-7124).

**Background:**

Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee.

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*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.*

The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (Committee) provides advice and makes recommendations to the Governor and the Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs (Department).

The Committee has 17 members appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms. The Committee must consist of:

- one member from the Washington Soldier's Home in Orting and one member from the Veterans' Home in Retsil;
- one member from each of the three congressionally chartered and recognized veterans service organizations with the largest memberships in the state;
- 10 members to represent the congressionally chartered and recognized veterans service organizations that have at least one active chapter in the state; and
- two members who are veterans at large.

The Governor must ensure that appointments represent all geographical parts of the state, as well as minority, and women veteran viewpoints.

#### State Veterans' Homes.

The State Constitution mandates that the Legislature provide a soldiers' home for honorably discharged resident soldiers, sailors, and marines who were disabled in the line of duty. In 1890 the Legislature created the Washington Soldiers' Home in Orting. In 1907 the Legislature established a branch of the Washington Soldiers' Home in Retsil, called the Washington Veterans' Home. In 2001 the Legislature established another branch in Spokane, called the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home. Finally, in 2014 the Walla Walla Veterans' Home was established.

These state veterans' homes, are managed by the Department. The Department must provide room and board, medical, dental, domiciliary and nursing care, physical and occupational therapy, and recreational activities, to residents of the state veterans' homes.

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#### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

The two positions on the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee that represent the state veterans' homes in Orting and Retsil are eliminated. Two more at large positions are added to the Committee.

The Committee must appoint members to serve as liaisons to each of the state veterans' homes. The veterans' homes liaisons must share information about Committee business with the resident council of each veterans' home. The liaisons also must ensure that the issues of the veterans' homes residents are included in regular Committee meetings.

#### **Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The amended bill provides for a representative from the state veterans' home in Orting and in Retsil on the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee, unless the veteran's home residents do not nominate a representative. It also requires liaisons to be appointed from the Veterans

Affairs Advisory Committee for each state veterans' home that is not represented on the committee.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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 Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (Committee) travels around the state to hold meetings and hear from constituents. The population in the state veterans homes has changed to less ambulatory and it is difficult for state veterans home representatives to travel and attend meetings. This bill offers an alternative for veteran home residents to continue involvement with the Committee without having to travel to the meetings. The Committee liaisons would help increase participation by residents in Committee business.

It might be better to preserve the direct representation of the veterans' homes on the Committee and to allow for an alternate appointee if the resident representative is not able to attend meetings.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Roach, prime sponsor; and Heidi Audette, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.