

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5633

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As of February 26, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to creating a coordinator for the helmets to hardhats program in the department of veterans affairs.

**Brief Description:** Creating a coordinator for the helmets to hardhats program in the department of veterans affairs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Conway, O'Ban, Hobbs, Chase, Kohl-Welles, Lias, McCoy and Hatfield.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Security: 2/12/15 [DP-WM].

**Ways & Means:** 2/25/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Lias, Ranking Minority Member; McCoy.

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Mark Eliason (786-7454)

**Background:** Helmets to Hardhats is a national nonprofit program designed to connect National Guard, Reserve, retired, and transitioning active-duty military service members with skilled training and career opportunities in the construction industry.

The program provides former and transitioning military personnel with job postings from the building and construction trades nationwide, which can be accessed online. To apply for work or membership, a candidate for employment completes a profile that informs hiring managers what transferable skills the candidate acquired during military service. Once a candidate submits interest in a career opportunity, they are contacted by a Helmets to Hardhats representative to ensure all application requirements are met.

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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.*

**Summary of Bill:** A coordinator for the Helmets to Hardhats program is established in the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, subject to available funding.

**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 (Government Operations & Security):** PRO: There is an enormous need to help the veterans leaving Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) who are looking for work. The federal government has pulled back from supporting this program, and last year we lost our coordinator, who serves as the bridge between the bases and the construction industry. The program gives people leaving the service an opportunity to get great jobs and apprenticeships. Hiring is beginning to pick up in the construction industry, and this presents a great opportunity to move veterans into good-paying jobs. Washington brought in the most veterans of any state when we had this position filled. Since 2012 opportunities for apprenticeship have tripled, but we haven't been able to put veterans into those slots because we don't have a person to make that connection. Nearly 700 service members are passing through Stone Education Center at JBLM daily, but there's nobody there linking them to jobs.

OTHER: The Department of Veterans Affairs is in favor of this bill. The number of veterans in the state is going to increase if there's a further reduction of troops and civilian jobs at bases. This particular position would align employers and trades with service members who have experience and need to get into the trades. The program has had a great success rate in the past and creates an improved quality of life for veterans and families.

**Persons Testifying (Government Operations & Security):** PRO: Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Ted Wicorek, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Todd Mitchell, Heat & Frost Insulators; Christopher Winters, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council # 5.

OTHER: Alfie Alvarado, WA State Dept. of Veterans Affairs.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: We used to have a position in the Department of Veterans Affairs and we lost federal funding. This position is located at the transition center at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and this person is not only moving people to the transportation trades but to all of the trades. The highest unemployment rate is amongst veterans at 22 percent and we urge your support.

OTHER: We had a Helmets to Hardhats coordinator that worked alongside the Department of Veterans Affairs between 2008 and 2012. That person was able to help place 523 veterans in different apprenticeship programs with an average wage of \$38.36 per hour. The funding for that program dried up at the same time there was a downturn in the economy. Now that we see improvements in the economy and a downsizing of the military it might be a good

time to look at this program again. We think it would be a good program to help veterans as they transition.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Dick Marcelynas, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

OTHER: Heidi Audette, WA State Dept. of Veterans Affairs.