

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6300

As of January 18, 2016

Title: An act relating to pro bono legal services for military service members, veterans, and their families.

Brief Description: Concerning pro bono legal services for military service members, veterans, and their families.

Sponsors: Senators O'Ban, Hobbs, Fain, Dammeier and Conway; by request of Attorney General.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/19/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Tim Ford (786-7423)

Background: State law prohibits the Attorney General's Office from engaging in the private practice of law. The Attorney General's Office cannot represent private citizens in court either to bring an action on behalf of an individual or to defend an individual. Any private citizen needing such representation should consult a private attorney.

Veterans, military personnel and their families may be eligible to receive some free or low fee legal services from a variety of regional and statewide non-profits depending upon their means and the resources of the non-profit entities.

Summary of Bill: An office of military and veteran legal assistance is created within the Attorney General's Office for the purpose of promoting and facilitating civil legal assistance programs, pro bono services, and self-help services for military service members, veterans, and their family members domiciled or stationed in Washington State. The legal assistance program does not permit the Attorney General's Office to provide criminal legal assistance.

The legal assistance program shall recruit and train volunteer attorneys and service programs willing to perform pro bono legal services for military members, veterans, and their families. The Attorney General may apply for and receive grants, gifts, or other contributions to support this legal assistance program.

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.

An attorney who renders legal assistance for this program is not liable for any civil damages for services rendered in good faith not amounting to gross negligence. The state is not liable for legal services provided by this program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2016.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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