

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2200

As Passed House:
February 13, 2020

Title: An act relating to creating the position of military spouse liaison.

Brief Description: Creating the position of military spouse liaison.

Sponsors: House Committee on Housing, Community Development & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Klippert, Kilduff, Leavitt, Van Werven, Griffey and Volz).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing, Community Development & Veterans: 1/15/20, 1/24/20 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/6/20, 2/8/20 [DPS(HOUS)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/20, 95-1.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the position of the Military Spouse Liaison (Liaison) within the Department of Veterans Affairs and assigns duties to the Liaison.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & VETERANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Jenkin, Ranking Minority Member; Gildon, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Frame, Johnson, J., Leavitt and Ramel.

Staff: Cassie Jones (786-7303).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Housing, Community Development & Veterans be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, 1st Vice Chair; Bergquist, 2nd Vice Chair; Stokesbary, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member;

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Rude, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Chandler, Chopp, Cody, Dolan, Dye, Fitzgibbon, Hansen, Hoff, Hudgins, Kilduff, Kraft, Macri, Mosbrucker, Pettigrew, Pollet, Ryu, Schmick, Senn, Steele, Sullivan, Sutherland, Tarleton, Tharinger and Ybarra.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is a state agency created in 1975. The powers and duties of the DVA include cooperating with local governments and the federal government, particularly regarding participation in federal grants-in-aid programs relating to veterans and veterans affairs. The DVA provides many services to veterans and their families, including medical care, assistance with claims for benefits, estate management, counseling, and financial assistance. The DVA assists veterans with education, training, and employment.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The position of military spouse liaison (liaison) is created within the DVA. The duties of the liaison include, but are not limited to:

- conducting outreach to and advocating on behalf of military spouses in Washington;
- providing assistance and information to military spouses seeking professional licenses and credentials or other employment in Washington; and
- researching issues facing military spouses and creating informational materials to assist military spouses and their families.

The liaison is encouraged to periodically report on the work of the liaison to the relevant committees of the Legislature and participate in policy development related to military spouses.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Housing, Community Development & Veterans):

(In support) Military spouses face many difficulties as spouses of military members. Military spouses who are professionals have a lot to offer the State of Washington and they face difficulty in obtaining professional licenses due to bureaucracy. This bill will help military families and it will help the state receive the services of professionals transitioning into Washington. The purpose of the liaison would be to help spouses shorten and streamline the process of transferring their professional licenses to Washington and begin working in their fields. The position will provide consultation and services to military spouses by assisting spouses seeking professional licenses, collaborating with family readiness groups, coordinating with other groups assisting military spouses, and connecting spouses to

employment programs they may need including apprenticeships and other employment opportunities.

Every state has different rules, laws, and organizations and much of the knowledge is passed around informally. The amount of information is overwhelming. Having a single point of contact in the state will save a lot of time and stress for a family moving to a new state.

Providing support to military spouses regarding professional licensing is critically important. Military spouses have professional licenses in higher numbers than the general population. Obtaining a license in a new state is costly and time consuming. This bill provides near-term assistance that spouses and families need.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) Military spouses face a negative bias when seeking employment, and they have difficulty finding child care. Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs does not have anyone that military spouses can consult to address these issues. There are an enormous number of resources to support families, and it is difficult to determine which resources are available and how to access them. A liaison will help direct resources regarding schools, childcare, employment, and recent employment changes. A liaison can help avoid problems and reduce challenges. A liaison will also make it easier for military spouses to integrate into a community without having to reinvent the wheel. Military spouses need an advocate to inform employers that they are valuable.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Housing, Community Development & Veterans): Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs; Tanja Struyck-Fogleman; Ali Taylor-Cipolla; Tammy Perreault, Washington Department of Defense; Ashlee Delaney; and Shane Inman, Veterans Legislative Coalition.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs; Tanja Struyck-Fogleman; Whitney Stafford; Annikka Trabucco; Jamie Lynn Blum; and Ashlee Delaney.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Housing, Community Development & Veterans): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.