

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6626

As of February 11, 2020

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

Brief Description: Creating the position of military spouse liaison.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, O'Ban, Hunt, Zeiger, Hobbs, Becker, Randall, Short, Brown and Wagoner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/05/20 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/11/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the position of military spouse liaison in the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

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

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Hasegawa, Hawkins and Takko.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Maria Hovde (786-7474)

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

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counseling, and financial assistance. DVA assists veterans with education, training, and employment.

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

- conducting outreach to and advocating on behalf of Washington military spouses;
- providing assistance and information to military spouses seeking professional licenses and credentials or other employment;
- coordinating research on issues facing military spouses and creating informational materials to assist military spouses and their families;
- examining barriers and providing recommendations to help military spouses access high-quality child care;
- in coordination with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, developing resources to increase access to high-quality child care for military families; and
- in coordination with the Employment Security Department, developing a common form to help military spouses quickly find meaningful employment by highlighting specific skills, training, and education.

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections):

PRO: We have done a great job of supporting our active and retired military service members, but we have overlooked military spouses. Military spouse employment is a multi-faceted issue with no one solution. The lack of affordable, quality child care acutely affects military communities because the private market takes advantage of scarcity. The military spouse community ranges from 15 to 30 percent unemployment, which leads to depression: military-dependent spouses and children commit 100 suicides per year.

Persons Testifying (State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections): PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections): PRO: Tanja Struyck-Fogleman, citizen; Jamie Lynn Blum, citizen; Annika Trabucco, citizen; Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs; Ashlee Delaney, military spouse.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill came out of multiple listening sessions DVA held with military spouses. Most families move every one to three years and every state has different laws. This position can help provide resources to

military spouses and direct them to resources. It will provide critical infrastructure for future military families. Military families do not have the luxury of having one person in place for a long enough period of time in order to establish these contacts. Having this position for families to contact prior to them moving into the state will relieve stress and allow these families to focus on the mission. It can be daunting for a spouse to figure out which resources exist, which they are eligible for, and which can help overcome personal barriers. If there was someone dedicated to helping spouses obtain employment it will have a positive effect on the economy. This position will also assist those who do not live close to a military base, including recruiters, members of the National Guard, and veterans.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Tanja Struyck-Fogleman. citizen; Annikka Trabbucco, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.