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**Technology, Economic Development, &  
Veterans Committee**

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**HB 1541**

**Brief Description:** Concerning the veterans affairs advisory committee.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Abell, Donaghy, Morgan, Kloba, Shavers, Zahn, Hill and Simmons;  
by request of Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Modifies the membership of the Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee by removing two members representing the veterans homes in Orting and Retsil and adding two at-large veteran members.
- Allows the Governor to appoint one member from a state-recognized Native American tribe, and one member who is a current or former Washington National Guard member.

**Hearing Date:** 1/29/25

**Staff:** Martha Wehling (786-7067).

**Background:**

Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee.

The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) provides advice and makes recommendations to the Governor and the Director of the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA). The VAAC consists of 17 members appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms. The VAAC members include:

- one member from the Washington Soldiers' Home and Colony in Orting;
- one member from the Washington Veterans' Home at Retsil;

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- three members, one from each of the three congressionally chartered and recognized veterans service organizations with the largest membership in the state;
- 10 members representing 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. The VAAC must appoint members to serve as liaisons to the state veterans' homes, unless the home has a representative appointed to the VAAC. Members appointed before 1992 were eligible to serve until the expiration of their terms and were eligible for reappointment.

#### 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 at Retsil, called the Washington Veterans' Home. In 2001 the Legislature established another branch in Spokane, called the Eastern Washington Veterans' Home. In 2014 the Walla Walla Veterans' Home was established.

These state veterans' homes are managed by the WDVA. The WDVA 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.

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

The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) membership is modified to remove two members and add two members. The representative from the Washington Soldiers' Home and Colony at Orting is removed, and the representative from the Washington Veterans' Home at Retsil is removed. Instead of two at-large veteran members, the Governor will appoint four at-large veteran members.

Out of the 10 member appointments not otherwise specified, the Governor has the option to appoint one veteran who is a member of a Native American tribe recognized in the state, and one veteran who is a current or former member of the Washington National Guard.

Reference to the 1992 member appointments is removed.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 23, 2025.

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