

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

Action:	Do Pass
Vote:	5 - 0 - 0
Yeas:	Carter, Gordly, Kruse, Courtney, Monnes Anderson
Nays:	0
Exc.:	0
Prepared By:	Shannon Strumpfer, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	2/28

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Deletes provisions permitting the Director of Veterans' Affairs to contract for attorney services for war veterans. Expands the rulemaking authority of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Expands the role of the Advisory Committee to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

ISSUES DISCUSSED: Provisions of the measure.

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: During the 1985 Legislative Session, House Bill 2769 was signed into law which authorized the Director of Veterans' Affairs to contract with attorneys to represent Oregon war veterans in claims under laws administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The legal services that could be provided are limited to the status of the war veteran as a prisoner of war; damages suffered to the exposure to causative agents; exposure to radiation during testing of nuclear weapons; or engagement in armed conflict with military forces of another nation.

Funding for this program was authorized for the 1985-87 biennium during a "test" phase through adjustments to the agency's budget in the amount of \$25,000. The Veterans Judicial Review Act of 1988 was passed by Congress that created the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals, which now allows for pro-bono attorneys to represent veterans with their appeals. Each year the Department of Veterans' Affairs is required to report to the Legislature about program activities during the prior calendar year. The March 2006 report noted that no funding exists for the Attorney Assistance Program beyond the amount budgeted for the 1985-87 biennium and none of the identified funds had been used for this program.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee is appointed by the Governor for no more than two four-year terms. The committee meets every three months and in August of each year, the committee submits a report to the Governor on all matters pertinent to the administration of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.