

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed
Vote:	8 - 0 - 0
Yeas:	Boone, Freeman, Komp, Matthews, Riley, Cowan
Nays:	0
Exc.:	Esquivel, Weidner
Prepared By:	David Molina, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	3/12, 4/9, 4/14, 4/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Creates Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care, comprised of a female combat veteran, health and mental health care providers, advocacy groups and state agency personnel, to study health care needs of women veterans. Directs task force to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor no later than October 1, 2010. Sunsets at the beginning of the 2011 Legislative Session. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan constitute the longest conflict period affecting the all-volunteer force
- Greater number of women in uniform currently serving in combat-situations than ever before
- The need for specialized care for women veterans by women health care professionals in proper setting
- Inadequate Veterans Administration health care facilities for returning women veterans that have been severely injured
- Shortage of inpatient or residential mental health/post-traumatic stress disorder treatment beds dedicated to female veterans in the Pacific Northwest
- Widespread support among women veterans, veterans advocacy organizations, public and community leaders

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Requires inclusion of a female combat veteran, health and mental health care providers, and advocacy groups on the task force.

BACKGROUND: The Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services Final Report (December 2008) found that a significant number of female combat veterans health care needs are not being met by the Veterans Affairs health care system. The report found that military sexual trauma (MST) and specific (non-coed) inpatient or residential mental health/post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment facilities are not available in the Pacific Northwest. The report further concludes that the twelve beds focused on women veterans west of the Mississippi Rivers are insufficient.

Currently, over 192,000 U.S. military women have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and comprise more than eleven percent of forces deployed to the Middle East. Over 100 women have lost their lives serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 600 have been wounded in action, in some cases suffering severe wounds such as amputations, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and PTSD. Traditionally, women have been excluded from official combat roles; however, the current asymmetrical conflict eliminates front lines. On average, U.S. and coalition forces are exposed to direct fire daily while serving in supporting roles and are constantly threatened by enemy mortars and rockets. Proponents of the measure assert the need to continue the discussion on women veterans' focusing its two-year study specifically on mental health, inpatient treatment availability, appropriate women veterans health care within Oregon and the federal VA health care system, and identification and tailored-specific treatment of MST.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.