

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Carrier – Senate: Sen. Winters

Revenue: No revenue impact

Fiscal: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass the A-Engrossed Measure

Vote: 19 – 0 – 3

House

Yeas: Buckley, D. Edwards, Garrard, Gilman, Jenson, Kotek, Nathanson, Richardson, Shields, G. Smith

Nays:

Exc: Galizio, Komp

Senate

Yeas: Bates, Carter, Girod, Johnson, Monroe, Verger, Walker, Whitsett, Winters

Nays:

Exc: Nelson

Prepared By: Kim To, Legislative Fiscal Office

Meeting Date: June 12, 2009

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: House Bill 2718 creates an eight-member Task Force on Women Veterans Health Care to study the health care needs of women including the identification and treatment of trauma, mental health, and substance abuse. The Task Force is instructed to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor by October 1, 2010. The Task Force must consult with federal, state county and local entities. The Task Force will sunset on the date of the convening of the next regular legislative session.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Minimal fiscal impact

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

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) in-patient 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.