

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass the A-Engrossed Measure
Vote:	5 - 0 - 0
Yeas:	Bates, Kruse, Morrisette, Morse, Monnes Anderson
Nays:	0
Exc.:	0
Prepared By:	Robert Shook, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	5/12

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:

- Number of women in uniform currently serving in combat situations
- Shortage of health- and mental health-related services dedicated to female veterans in the Pacific Northwest
- Need for specialized care for women veterans by women health care professionals

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 Administration (VA) 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 women 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, 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 House Bill 2718-A 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.

5/15/2009 11:40:00 AM

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