

Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Carrier – House: Rep. Nathanson

Carrier – Senate: Sen. Monroe

Revenue: No revenue impact

Fiscal: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass the A-Engrossed Measure

Vote: 16 – 0 – 6

House

Yeas: Buckley, D. Edwards, Galizio, Gilman, Kotek, Nathanson, Richardson, Shields

Nays:

Exc: Garrard, Hunt, Jenson, G. Smith

Senate

Yeas: Girod, Johnson, Monroe, Nelson, Verger, Walker, Whitsett, Winters

Nays:

Exc: Bates, Carter

Prepared By: Kim To, Legislative Fiscal Office

Meeting Date: June 5, 2009

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: House Bill 3104 requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to establish a website that allows members of the public to enter contact information, and request information about veterans' benefits and services. ODVA is directed to coordinate outreach to persons who request information through the website. On or before October first of each even-numbered year, ODVA must report to the appropriate interim committees of the Legislative Assembly on the Department's outreach to veterans. Operative on October 1, 2009, the bill requires all executive branch state agencies to include on the agency's website a link to the ODVA veterans' benefits, services and outreach website. Operative January 2, 2010, the bill instructs ODVA to provide state agencies and county governments with printed materials to inform individuals how to contact ODVA to request information about veterans' benefits and services. Agencies and county government are required to make these printed materials available in offices that are accessible to the public. On or before October first of each even-numbered year, state agency directors must report to the appropriate interim committees of the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of measures taken to provide customers or clients with information about veterans' benefits and services.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Federal benefit reimbursements process

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: The Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services learned during its 10-month examination of veterans' policy that substantial amounts of federal aid including compensation payments and health programming are consistently unrealized because of a systemic failure of state, regional, and local public agencies to ask customer/client veterans' status. The task force noted that the state receives \$162 return on investment for every \$1 invested in a veteran from federal reimbursements.

Recognizing the value in federal benefits reimbursements, the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs and that state's Department of Motor Vehicles initiated efforts to identify veterans—resulting in the discovery of 70,000 veterans that were not receiving benefits. In Oregon, only 22 percent of veterans are identified through the U.S. Census in the state system. Proponents assert that this lack of a statewide agency systematic approach foregoes \$4 billion in revenue of federal reimbursements to Oregon.