

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass and Be Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

Vote: 5 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Bates, Kruse, Morrisette, Morse, Monnes Anderson

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Robert Shook, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/12, 3/17

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs Department of Oregon Military, and Department of Veterans' Affairs to create informational campaigns on certain mental and physical disorders affecting veterans.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Suicide rate in Oregon
- Oregon Partnership collaborative program
- National informational campaign efforts

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No Amendment.

BACKGROUND: Given the nature of injuries in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the strain of long and repeated deployments, members of the military and returning veterans face an array of challenges such as substance abuse, depression and other mental health issues. The rate of suicide among soldiers and veterans is on the rise.

The Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services identified the need for public awareness campaigns on Military Sexual Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury and Suicide. Educating veterans and their families about these issues was started by the Department of Veterans' Affairs in late 2008 through the use of short videos that were broadcast on local television stations. The ads proved so successful that an expanded informational campaign is being proposed in SB 606. Oregon Partnership, a community based organization that operates the state's Crisis Alcohol/Drug and Suicide Call Center experienced a 71 percent increase in calls since January 2008. Military veterans, soldiers and their family members are placing a growing number of these calls.

This bill would coordinate the efforts of the Department of Oregon Military, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to increase the knowledge and understanding with the general community, public agencies serving veterans, individually returning veterans, and their family members. A state-wide information campaign will increase awareness of the issues facing veterans with re-integration into civilian life, improve general knowledge among public agencies about suicide prevention, and disseminate information on prevention of military sexual trauma and domestic violence.