

**REVENUE:** No revenue impact

**FISCAL:** Fiscal statement issued

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|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Action:</b>        | Do Pass  |
| <b>Vote:</b>          | 5 - 0 - 0  |
| <b>Yeas:</b>          | Bates, Kruse, Morrisette, Morse, Monnes Anderson |
| <b>Nays:</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Exc.:</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Prepared By:</b>   | Robert Shook, Administrator                      |
| <b>Meeting Dates:</b> | 4/2, 4/14, 4/21                                  |

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Creates the Task Force on Women Veterans' Health Care and directs the task force to study the needs of women veterans. Sunset upon date of convening of the next regular biennial legislative session.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- General description of women veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan
- Unique needs of women veterans
- Number of women veterans in Oregon
- Changing role of women from nursing and support staff to combat

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:** No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:** Unlike the Vietnam War, where only 7,500 women served, mostly as nurses, the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have seen 192,000 women serve, many in combat. The paradigm of women veterans has shifted from women serving strictly in support positions to women in combat, suffering combat injuries, including amputations, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and a host of orthopedic conditions.

Women make up approximately 15 percent of the current armed forces. Nationally, there are 1.4 million women veterans who constitute about seven percent of the federal Veterans' Administration (VA) health care patients, and about five percent of patients in Oregon. The VA provides specific care to women veterans; however, the nation was largely unprepared to provide for the high number of women serving in the current conflicts and the special needs they have when returning home. Given their combat experience, some women are not comfortable discussing their situation with male veteran service officers or male health care providers. The VA system is not geared toward ensuring a female provider is always available to provide care for a female veteran.

Senate Bill 725 creates a task force to study the health care needs of women veterans. In addition to a member from the Oregon House of Representatives and the Oregon Senate, other representatives include members from the Departments of Human Services, Department of Veteran's Affairs, the Oregon Military Department, Oregon Medical Association, Oregon Nurses Association, and the League of Oregon Cities. Staff support to the task force will be provided by the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military, and Human Services. Task force members are not entitled to compensation or reimbursement for expenses and will serve as volunteers on the task force.

The task force report and recommendations shall be submitted to the Governor no later than October 1, 2010.

4/24/2009 3:46:00 PM

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