



# Oregon

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## Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

HB 4063

### Professional Licensing for Veterans

Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Val Conley and I am the Deputy Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs. I am here today to support HB 4063, which would allow various state licensing agencies to accept military training or experience as an acceptable substitution for traditional training.

While HB 4063 is modeled on a Washington state bill constructed by the Defense Department, discussions regarding this concept in Oregon began during the 2008 Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services and became a recommendation to the Legislature during the 2010 Legislative Task Force on Veterans' Reintegration. The Reintegration Task Force recommended the Legislature "Provide 'Direct-Entry' licensing for qualified military occupational specialties."

During the 2011 Regular Session, ODVA asked the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to establish a workgroup to explore the idea of licensing military veterans whose military skills, experience and education clearly qualified them for such licensing. The workgroup would have included all the stakeholders so that everyone could agree as to what was doable and where compromises needed to be implemented. Unfortunately, in the flurry of activity that happens around Sine Die, the workgroup was not officially established, although the House Committee supported the idea. Thus, ODVA did not move forward with this concept and instead sought to re-establish the workgroup during interim committees.

During the November 2011 interim hearings, Mr. San Souci testified to his success in passing legislation in Washington. The House Veterans Committee was impressed and asked Mr. San Souci to work with committee staff to draft a bill for February, which is HB 4063.

As you can imagine, we are excited about HB 4063. We believe that many veterans have experience, skills and education that are indeed equivalent to a licensee's requirements. For example, a combat medic who spent a year saving lives in Afghanistan would most likely be qualified to be at least an EMT 1. A military heavy equipment operator or truck driver may be qualified for those licenses. You get the idea.

Our goal, of course, is to get our veterans back into the workforce as quickly as possible. Without a bill such as HB 4063, these veterans may have to go back to school, spend money they don't have and take courses they've already taken in the military just to check the box for a licensing requirement. By allowing the agencies to accept military skills and experience as equivalent, everyone wins!

You may be asking yourself how do we know what is equivalent? Luckily, the Legislature solved that problem last session with the passage of SB 275. You may recall that there is an organization called the American Council on Education (ACE) that maintains a database crosswalking all military skills, experience and education for college credit. SB 275 mandated that our Oregon community colleges use ACE to apply military credits for college. The University System already uses ACE. Because of ACE, licensing boards will know if a veteran's skills, experience and education are indeed equivalent to their requirements. Based on what we know of ACE, which just provided the community colleges a workshop, we believe this will be a very easy process.

I want to thank the Committee for considering this bill during this short session. We believe this bill will make a significant difference in getting veterans back to work after their military service. I would be happy to answer any questions.