
Central Human Resources

To: Chair Boquist and other members of the
Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
From: Travis Graves, Human Resources Director, Multnomah County
Date: March 17, 2015
Re: Support for Senate Bill 87

Multnomah County strongly supports SB 87 because it improves upon the current veterans' preference statute. Current statute, unfortunately, is unclear, leaving employers and veterans confused about how the preference is provided and embroiled in litigation.

SB 87 provides clear guidance on when to apply preference during the hiring process, and allows for meaningful interviews that don't waste the time or needlessly raise the hopes of applying veterans.

The methods outlined in the bill will work for Oregon's diverse array of public employers: rural and urban; large and small; public safety and general government. Meanwhile, this legislation preserves the multiple preferences for qualified veterans, including the requirement to hire a veteran applicant if all things are equal.

Multnomah County has nearly 6,000 employees, including temporary and on-call workers. We receive approximately 27,000 applications for employment annually. Although the number of vacancies we fill has remained fairly stable at a few hundred per year, our candidate volume has doubled since 2009. As a large public employer operating in Oregon's most urbanized job market, we are often in competition with private sector employers for the same talented applicants. Passage of this bill as drafted will bolster our ability to hire exceptional staff. Furthermore, this legislation will allow us to operate more efficiently by taking the guesswork out of compliance.

Multnomah County is committed to hiring and promoting veterans within our ranks. We view veterans as an important and vital component of our workforce. As the human resources director for Multnomah County, I am proud to stand alongside other public employers across the state in support of SB 87.