



Carla C. Piluso

STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 50

900 Court St. NE, H-491;

Salem, OR 97301

503-986-1450

rep.carlapiluso@state.or.us

HB 3479:

Creates position of Oregon Women Veterans Coordinator in Department Of Veterans' Affairs and specifies responsibilities. Requires report to Legislative Assembly on or before September 15, 2018. Appropriates moneys to department to establish position.

Background:

The US Department of Veterans' Affairs provides a wide variety of benefits from educational assistance (GI Bill), health care, home loans, insurance, and other services for retired United States armed forces personnel, their dependents, and survivors. Women are the fastest-growing military population, with 28,483 women veterans currently in Oregon. In the next 30 years, women are expected to make up almost one-fifth of the veteran population.

Issue:

Even with the growing population of women veterans in Oregon, the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs has begun to realize that women veterans need access to gender-specific care, a challenge in the predominately male-centric VA system. Furthermore, women veterans are accessing the VA benefits they are entitled to at a much lower rate than their male counterparts. Women veterans and their families experience undue strain when they are unaware of and not accessing important medical and support services through the VA. This also unnecessarily strains Oregon's budget as women veterans and their families access similar services through state programs, like the Oregon Health Plan.

Solution:

In order to better serve women veterans and their families, HB 3479 establishes an Oregon Women Veterans Coordinator for the state of Oregon. This position within the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs would help veterans and their families apply for and access benefits they are entitled to, create and distribute information targeted for women veterans and their families, and help women veterans through the appeals process if a denial of benefits occurs. The creation of this position will demonstrate that Oregon cares for *all* of her veterans and ensures equitable access to services that benefit women veterans and their families. Additionally, this will aid Oregon to leverage federal dollars from VA benefits programs, saving money for the state.