

PRELIMINARY STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

CARRIER:

Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, statement not yet issued

SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO: None

Action:

Vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Exc.:

Prepared By: Cheyenne Ross, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/24, 3/31

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Makes veterans’ and servicemembers’ personally-identifiable information exempt from disclosure pursuant to public records request, when obtained and kept by Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs in due course of its functions.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Overbreadth of provision permitting agency to define protected information via rulemaking
- Necessity of maintaining trust of, and eliminating barriers to, population being served
- Sensitive nature of information in need of protection

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

[-1 amendment] Replaces open-ended reference to protected information with list of specific information exempt from disclosure.

BACKGROUND: The Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) conducts outreach to encourage veterans to take advantage of benefits they have earned, and often acts in capacities that require the veteran’s trust, such as managing the veteran’s finances, long-term health care, and home ownership. Specifically targeting individual servicemembers is an established tactic of groups hostile to Americans and American values. Protecting the privacy of both veterans and servicemembers is of paramount concern to ODVA and the state.

Senate Bill 253 keeps veterans’ and servicemembers’ personally-identifiable information confidential, if it was obtained by ODVA in the performance of the agency’s role and functions.