



OREGON COALITION OF POLICE & SHERIFFS

May 6, 2015

Rep. John Lively
Oregon State Capitol, H-488
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Senate Bill 87-A – OPPOSE

Rep. Lively,

The Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs (ORCOPS) represents nearly 2,500 law enforcement professionals in this State, many of whom served honorably in our Armed Forces. They are the men and women who dedicated their lives to protect the freedoms we enjoy. ORCOPS and our members have closely followed Senate Bill 87-A, and we strongly oppose it.

Hiring and promotion preferences for veterans are a longstanding and important part of Oregon's civil service law. They help lend appropriate weight to the various skillsets that veterans have developed through military training and education. These preferences also provide a clear and consistent method of implementing that policy within our civil service system.

Some supporters have claimed that Senate Bill 87-A "clarifies" existing law. In reality, SB 87-A seeks to dilute the strong public policy behind veterans' preference and substitute in its place almost complete employer control over accepting or rejecting veterans who apply for civil service jobs or promotions. For example, in deciding whether a veteran has met the required qualifications for a competitive hire or promotion, the employer would have "sole discretion" to determine whether military training or experience is a transferable skill. That means that before a veteran is even considered for the job, the employer has "sole discretion" to essentially reject the veteran who is applying for the job. That is no clarification to the existing law. Rather, it's a complete abandonment of current public policy that seeks to give veterans a competitive place in the hiring and promotions process.

The current law is not broken; it does not require a public employer to select a veteran who applies for a job or promotion. Instead, current law requires public employers to give veterans a fighting chance when seeking to continue their public service as civilian employees. Neither the existing law nor the State's Labor Commissioner have been unclear on the implementation of this policy. The real effect of SB 87 would be a significant roll-back of veterans' hiring and promotion preferences.

As written, SB 87-A is bad public policy, and ORCOPS strongly opposes it. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Respectfully,

Daryl Turner
President, Oregon Coalition of Police and Sheriffs

Cc: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness