



City of Portland
Bureau of
Human Resources
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May 19, 2015

House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
Representative John Lively, Chair
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room F
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland supports SB 87-A, which improves upon the current veterans' preference statute and brings much needed clarity to the law.

The current veterans' preference laws have caused confusion for public employers who are trying to comply with the law and provide a meaningful preference in hiring for our veteran applicants. The law has also led to confusion for veteran applicants because the statute does not clearly communicate what preference they are entitled to and how it will be applied. SB 87-A benefits public employers by giving clear direction on how to comply with the law, but it also provides veterans with a preference that is more likely to lead to employment.

Historically, veterans' preference was provided by giving veterans additional points on civil service tests. As employers moved away from the use of civil service tests in a variety of public service positions, and away from point-based assessments of applicants, employers had to find new ways to provide preference. The current version of ORS 408.230 was adopted in 2007, and it recognized the need for amendments to the law to account for the changing ways of recruitment processes for public sector positions. While points remained as an option, public employers were also given leeway to adopt other methods of giving special consideration to veteran candidates. While the intent was good, the practical application has not been successful for many public employers who are now facing costly litigation.

SB 87-A rectifies problems with the current veterans' preference laws by providing public employers with a clear path as to how to comply with the law. This will reduce costly litigation and create uniform standards for application of the preference. The clarity and uniformity provided by SB 87-A will also benefit veterans seeking public employment because they will know what preference they are entitled to and how it will be applied by every public employer in the state. Further, employers will be able to provide a preference at the most meaningful stages of the hiring process – for instance at the initial interview and the final selection stages.

For these reasons, the City of Portland encourages your support for SB 87-A. Thank you.


Anna Kanwit
Director, Bureau of Human Resources

Charlie Hales, Mayor

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