



## Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee

March 7, 2017

### Senate Bill 80 Briefing: Training and Assistance for Oregon Indian Tribal Veteran Representatives

**What the measure does:** SB 80 authorizes the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to provide assistance, liaison efforts and training to the Oregon Indian Tribal Veteran Representatives (TVRs) and assist the Tribes with accreditation of TVRs by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

**Background:** According to the Department of Defense, American Indians and Alaska Natives have one of the highest representations per capita in the U.S. Armed Forces. There are nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. ODVA has informally worked with several tribes to assist them with establishing tribal veteran representatives who support tribal veterans in accessing their earned federal benefits and connecting tribal veterans to community resources. Tribal veterans are an underserved population and have not been formally recognized and honored for their commitment to our military.

The concept serves two purposes: to honor and recognize Oregon tribal veterans and provide ODVA with clear statutory authority to provide assistance and training to tribal veteran representatives, including assistance with accreditation with the USDVA. ODVA currently trains all county veteran service officers (CVSOs) and other veteran service officers (VSOs), and accredits CVSOs and VSOs. We strive to better serve tribal veterans across the state.

Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, among other states, have robust programs working with tribal veterans.

**Solution:** Amend ORS chapter 406 to add language that states that ODVA, in recognition and honor of the service and sacrifice of Native American veterans, is authorized to aid Oregon Indian Tribes in connection with their programs of service to veterans and shall aid and assist the Tribes with accreditation of Tribal Veteran Service Representatives by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

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