

Representative Carla Piluso – Testimony in support of  
HB 2908: Veteran Volunteer Coordinator

Chair Evans, members of the committee, for the record my name is Carla Piluso, State Representative from House District 50, the Great City of Gresham. I am here today to ask for your support of House Bill 2908, to establish a volunteer coordinator position in the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

A sea of goodwill for veterans exists in our communities across the state, including the goodwill of many individuals who are enthusiastic about volunteering their time and service for veterans, especially if their volunteer efforts include connecting with veterans on a personal level.

One of the greatest challenges for the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs is outreach – connecting with veterans, providing them with important and accurate information, and guiding them to people and organizations that provide benefits, aid and assistance. For many veterans, the personal connection is very important. Volunteers could be a key resource for ODVA's outreach and connection to veterans.

House Bill 2908 establishes the position of Veteran Volunteer Coordinator within the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs. This person will launch a program to recruit, train and deploy a network of volunteers to reach veterans out in their communities.

The strength of the program is based on leveraging the time, energy and expertise of an army of volunteers. The volunteers would be a major referral source for our County Veteran Service Officers and would help veterans connect with these experts who can file their claims. The volunteers could be armed with information about local services and activities for veterans, particularly aging veterans.

Initially, the program would focus the volunteers on connecting aging veterans with local skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, and organizations that primarily serve seniors, including Meals on Wheels and senior centers. The volunteers could serve as the local connection for ODVA's conservatorship and representative payee clients.

During the 2015 session, I was honored to be involved in establishing a women veterans' coordinator position. I see this bill as the next step in an ongoing process of better connecting with our veterans and helping them access the services available to them.

Through this program, ODVA would be able to extend its reach to veterans through a network of volunteers, which is a very low-cost, dynamic and powerful solution for veteran's outreach. I urge your support.