

SB 476 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

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Meeting Dates: 5/11, 5/25

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee to recommend whether the Legislative Assembly should add disabled veterans to the definition of "preferred worker" so that employers may receive the same benefits for hiring them as are available for hiring permanently disabled injured workers, through the Reemployment Assistance Program. Requires recommendation by February 1, 2018. Sunsets December 31, 2018. Takes effect 91st day after *sine die*.

Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact

Revenue: Has no revenue impact

Senate Vote: Ayes 30

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Consumer and Business Services administers return-to-work programs in Oregon, including the Reemployment Assistance Program. The Reemployment Assistance Program includes two major programs (and several smaller programs): the Employer-at-Injury Program and the Preferred Worker Program (PWP). The PWP provides financial incentives to employers that hire "preferred workers" - workers that are permanently disabled due to a compensable, on-the-job injury or occupational disease, who are unable to return to regular work. If an injured worker is hired as a preferred worker and has a new injury during the first three years of reemployment, the Reemployment Assistance Program pays for the claim, including the administrative costs. In addition, the PWP provides wage subsidies, direct employment purchases, and pays for worksite modifications.

Senate Bill 476-A requires the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee to advise the Legislative Assembly by February 1, 2018, whether to add disabled veterans to the definition of "preferred worker" for purposes of Reemployment Assistance Programs, so that employers would receive the same benefits for hiring them as they would receive for hiring a permanently disabled injured worker.