

SB 81 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Boquist

Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Action Date: 04/11/17
Action: Do pass.
Vote: 3-0-1-0
Yeas: 3 - Boquist, Monnes Anderson, Olsen
Exc: 1 - President Courtney
Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued
Revenue: No revenue impact
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WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to assist veterans with obtaining health care (including mental health care) via federal, state and/or local health care systems.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Distinguishing between veterans' benefit program areas: ODVA responsible for claims; federal Veterans' Administration (VA), for health care
- Purpose of statutory authority

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Access to health care can be confusing and daunting under ordinary circumstances. It can be even more so for individuals who are isolated, or elderly, or who have mobility or complex health issues. There is an emerging profession dedicated to assisting people navigate the health care system, called Patient Advocates or Health Navigators. These individuals have expertise working with social service agencies, medical/behavioral health systems and the insurance industry. Veterans face the same, and many additional challenges accessing care through the federal Veterans' Administration (VA). Although some assistance is available through the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), its primary focus is to provide access to and advocacy for federal and state benefits, such as compensation and pensions, by processing claims and appeals, and by making referrals to state and local resources.

Senate Bill 81 authorizes ODVA to assist veterans with obtaining health care (including mental health care) via federal, state and/or local health care systems.