

**SB 81 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Carrier:** Rep. Meek

**House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness**

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**Action Date:** 06/01/17  
**Action:** Do Pass.  
**Vote:** 7-0-1-0  
**Yeas:** 7 - Esquivel, Evans, Lewis, Lively, Meek, Parrish, Post  
**Exc:** 1 - Boone  
**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued  
**Revenue:** No revenue impact  
**Prepared By:** Bradley Volk, LPRO Analyst

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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:**

- Complexity of federal VA system
- Amount of VA expenditures in Oregon for medical care (approximately 40 percent of \$2.8 billion)
- Purpose of providing statutory authority
- Distinguishing between state and federal areas of responsibility

**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.