

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1557. As a native Oregonian who has served in the Oregon Army National Guard for over seven years, and who recently earned a Bachelor of Science from Western Oregon University, I am all too familiar with the challenges that our citizen-soldiers face while trying to complete their education. While our great state has protections in place for service members that are called to serve for a 30 day period or longer, shorter periods of service can be just as disruptive to a service member trying to complete their education.

I can only speak to my experience in the Oregon Army National Guard, but there are many situations in which a soldier would be on active duty for fewer than 30 days. The Army's Air Assault and Pathfinder schools, held at Oregon's Camp Rilea once a year, are both about two weeks long. A unit's annual training period, typically two to three weeks, could in some cases fall during the school year. A professional development school such as the Army's Basic Leadership Course, which soldiers are required to complete to advance in their military career, takes just over three weeks, not including travel time to and from the school. When my unit helped fight the Canyon Creek Complex fire near John Day in 2015, I served for about three weeks. These periods of service are often high-tempo, with minimal down time, making it unreasonable to expect students to keep up with their schoolwork while attending to their duties.

If these shorter periods of service seem inconsequential, bear in mind that Oregon public universities are on the quarter system, meaning that each term has only 10 weeks of instruction, followed by the final exam. Missing three weeks means missing 30% of the entire course. When I was a full-time student and I knew that I was to be called to active duty for more than 30 days during a college term, I usually just wouldn't take classes that term. However, if I knew that I would only be serving for two or three weeks, the choices become much tougher. Will I be able to keep up with those classes while I am away? Should I take a lighter load of classes to give myself a better chance of catching back up when I return? What if those few weeks happen to fall right before the week of final exams, giving me no time to study but still making it technically possible for me to take the final? These are not hypothetical questions; I have had to face each of these situations, as I am sure hundreds of other Oregon service members have over their college careers.

Oregon service members play a vital role in the security of our nation and the welfare of our state, but outside of their official capacities, they are also our family, our friends, our neighbors, and members of our communities. Many of them are also full-time students, working to build better lives for themselves and those around them. They deserve our support, and so I urge you to join me in supporting Senate Bill 1557.

Very Sincerely,

Dane Moorehead