



## Senate Judiciary Committee

### Senate Bill 35A

## Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Testimony | March 29, 2019

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### Summary

Senate Bill 35A was submitted to the Legislature at the request of Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) and is a subsequent referral to the Senate Judiciary Committee after consideration in the Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee, specifically to consider the conservatorship provisions in the bill.

Senate Bill 35A has three purposes.

First, it provides a technical amendment for the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs conservatorship program that streamlines our processes for filing vouchers and depository statements with the court and allows the agency to update its processes to provide for current electronic banking processes.

The second purpose of the bill is to make permanent the campus veteran grant program that was created under Senate Bill 143 in the 2017 Legislative Session and is due to sunset on January 2, 2020.

Finally, the original bill was amended by the Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee to make minor amendments to the campus grant program and to add a new Section 4 that allocates \$1.2 million to the program.

### Conservatorship program

ODVA has a conservatorship program for our most vulnerable veterans who are unable to manage their own finances. Oregon courts oversee all financial activities of our conservatorship program. The current statutes in ORS Chapter 125 (Protective Proceedings) require conservators to send a copy of all depository statements and vouchers (negotiated checks) to the court for each annual accounting.

ODVA is required by statute to use the Oregon State Treasury (Oregon Short Term Fund) as a financial institution for conservatorship funds. The individual client depository statements required under the statute are not available for ODVA to provide to the courts, because Oregon State Treasury places all conservatorship client funds in a pooled account.

Additionally, collection of the vouchers (negotiated checks) are provided to ODVA on CD's sent each month by the bank, and for any ACH items, there is no voucher. ODVA currently uses a very labor intensive process to look for each check by number, locate the correct disk, and then print each check for more than 140 conservatorship clients and provide these printed checks to the court.

Note that trust companies are exempt from filing vouchers. To streamline the process within ODVA, we propose amending ORS Chapter 125 to exempt ODVA from filing vouchers and treat the agency with the same requirements set up for trust companies.

This streamlined process would allow ODVA to keep vouchers on file and provide them to any interested party upon request. In addition, the Uniform Trial Court Rules (UTCRC) 9.180 (2) states: "Unless the fiduciary is excused from filing vouchers, the accounting shall include depository statements for each account." If ORS Chapter 125 is amended to exempt ODVA from filing vouchers, this will also release ODVA from the obligation to file depository statements.

The amendments to existing statutes will align the court filing requirements in ODVA's conservatorship program with the court filing requirements for trust companies.

### **Campus Veteran Grant Program**

SB 35 also makes permanent the highly successful campus veteran grant program established under SB 143 (2017). Current states, which are due to sunset on January 2, 2020, direct the Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop and implement one or more grant programs statewide to expand and enhance existing campus veteran resource centers and employ campus veteran resource coordinators on campuses of community colleges and public universities. These campus veteran programs have three purposes:

- To help veterans successfully transition from military service to college life;
- To help veterans succeed in college and complete their educational goals; and
- Successfully transition from college to the workforce and the community.

The program is a great success and the Department wants to continue the program and has provided for the program in the Governor's Budget. The bill makes permanent the Campus Veteran Resources Grant Program.