

## House Bill 4066 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Specifies that veterans must provide evidence of eligibility for veterans' preference in public employment at time of application for civil service positions, which may include any documentation demonstrating preference eligibility. Requires public employers that do not interview applicants who are veterans must provide written explanation for reasons for that decision. Permits disabled veterans, or surviving spouses of deceased disabled veterans, to use state parks, individual campsites, or day use areas without charge. Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop and implement veterans workforce grant programs and housing grant programs. Repeals the sunset on the Veteran Educational Bridge Grant Program. Specifies that members of Oregon National Guard do not need to first accept available federal aid grants to receive assistance through the Oregon Promise program. Exempts certain disabled veterans and surviving spouses from taxation on a homestead or personal property. Repeals provisions related to homestead property tax exemptions for surviving spouses of veterans of the Civil War or Spanish-American War. Takes effect on 91<sup>st</sup> day following adjournment sine die.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

**BACKGROUND:** Oregon law specifies that public agencies must provide veterans and disabled veterans with preferences in both hiring and promotion. In addition to providing the right to an interview, candidates who are veterans receive five points at each stage of the hiring process, while disabled veterans receive 10 points. House Bill 4066 requires applicants who would claim these preferences to provide evidence of eligibility to do so for civil service positions. Conversely, public employers choosing not to interview an applicant who is a veteran must provide a written explanation for that decision.

Oregon's state park system offers free camping and free parking at day-use fee parks to all U.S. veterans with any level of service-connected disability, as well as to active-duty personnel on official leave. House Bill 4066 expands this eligibility to surviving spouses of deceased disabled veterans.

House Bill 4066 also directs the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to develop and implement a grant program to assist veterans to transition into the workforce or business community. Entities could be awarded grants for providing veterans with training programs, apprenticeships, employment opportunities, or technical support or financial assistance for business creation. Similarly, the measure directs ODVA to establish a grant program for entities that provide housing assistance to veterans, including placement assistance, construction assistance, rent/utility assistance, and rental or home ownership training or education. Both grant programs would be eligible to access moneys in the Veterans' Services Fund to develop and implement the program. The Department is directed to submit a report to the Legislative Assembly on the program development process by September 2024.

House Bill 2201 (2019) established the Veteran Educational Bridge Grant Program to assist veterans in completing educational programs that may have been interrupted or impinged by service requirements. Administered by ODVA, the program offers grants of up to \$5,000 to veterans to cover the cost of completing a higher education program. The program was originally scheduled to sunset in January 2022, but was extended by legislation enacted in 2021. House Bill 4066 eliminates the sunset on the bridge grant program.

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The Oregon Promise Grant program was established to help cover tuition costs at any Oregon community college for recent high school graduates or persons who recently completed their GED who meets grade or test score requirements. House Bill 4066 specifies that members of the Oregon National Guard are not required to accept federal grants available to them in order to qualify to receive Oregon Promise grants.

Oregon exempts certain disabled veterans, or their unmarried surviving spouse, from certain property tax assessments. House Bill 4066 revises this exemption for veterans with a 100 percent or higher service-connected disability, or the surviving spouse of a veteran who died of service-related injury or illness or who received the property tax exemption in this measure, from all property tax on a homestead or personal property. The measure clarifies that, for surviving spouses, the exemption applies only until the date of first remarriage. The measure also repeals a previous property tax exemption for surviving spouses of veterans of the Civil War (1861-1865) and Spanish-American War (1898).

House Bill 4066 is the veterans omnibus bill for the 2022 session.