

HB 4082 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

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Meeting Dates: 2/22, 2/22, 2/24

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs county governing boards to designate veterans' remains coordinators to identify unclaimed human remains located within the county, establish eligibility for interment, and cause interment at a national cemetery. Outlines: information that veterans' remains coordinators must provide to county veterans' service officers; process for transferring remains, identity, and eligibility information; responsibilities of county veterans' service officers in process; and responsibility of entities that may be in possession of remains of indigent persons.

Fiscal Impact Statement Issued: this measure has an indeterminate fiscal impact.

Revenue Impact Statement Issued: this measure has no revenue impact.

Passed. Ayes, 52; Excused, 5--Bonham, Boshart Davis, Nelson, Prusak, Reschke; Excused for Business of the House, 3--Breese-Iverson, Holvey, Speaker Rayfield.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Dignified burial of veterans' cremains
- Veterans' remains coordinator requirements
- Handling and burial of unclaimed remains of veterans in Oregon and across the country

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The National Funeral Directors Association estimates that 57.5 percent of deceased individuals in 2021 were cremated, up from 54.8 percent in 2013. The national cremation rate is expected to reach nearly 80 percent by 2035, which would represent roughly 2.8 million cremations per year.

Any member of the U.S. Armed Forces who dies while on active duty, or veterans who are discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, may be eligible for burial in a national cemetery. This benefit also applies to spouses and dependents of veterans. However, burial benefits do not always cover the cost of the burial.

There are instances, in Oregon and elsewhere, when the cremated remains of a veteran are unclaimed and uninterred.

House Bill 4082 A directs counties to designate one or more "veterans' remains coordinators" to work in a volunteer capacity to identify unclaimed cremated or reduced remains located within the county, establish eligibility for interment in a national cemetery, and arrange for same.