

## **SB 832 A -2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

### **House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness**

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**Meeting Dates:** 5/30

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#### **WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) Advisory Committee to advise Legislative Assembly by February 1, 2018, on merits of requiring ODVA to establish a grant program, in cooperation with the Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health, to solicit qualified nonprofit providers to assist rural veterans with access to health care, veterans' benefits, housing, transportation and court processes.

*FISCAL: Has minimal fiscal impact*

*REVENUE: Has minimal revenue impact*

*Vote in Senate: Ayes 29; Excused 1*

#### **ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

##### **EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

-2 Replaces the measure. Directs ODVA in collaboration with the Office of Rural Health to establish a grant program to qualified nonprofit organizations to provide services to veterans and veteran families in rural areas. Directs ODVA to issue requests for proposal from nonprofit organizations to provide services to veterans that increase veteran access to health care, assist veterans in applying for and receiving benefits, provide housing to veterans, provide veterans access to transportation, and assist veterans who are involved in the criminal and civil justice systems. Directs ODVA to adopt rules.

##### **BACKGROUND:**

Veterans' health care benefits are provided through the federal Veterans Administration (VA). The VA sites its main hospital facilities in population centers, which can negatively impact access to care for those veterans who live in rural areas. The Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health (ORH) exists to increase access for veterans in rural areas who rely on the VA for health care. Programs like Veterans Choice have been implemented to address the needs of rural veterans, but criticisms persist, particularly with regard to eligibility requirements and administrative bureaucracy. Rural veterans overall, especially as they age, experience difficulty with access to all manner of assistance, not just access to health care.

Senate Bill 832 A requires the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly by February 1, 2018, on the merits of requiring ODVA to establish a grant program, in cooperation with ORH, to solicit qualified nonprofit providers to assist rural veterans with access to health care, veterans' benefits, housing, transportation and court processes.