

HB 4082 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Management

Carrier: Rep. Goodwin

Action Date: 02/10/22
Action: Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)
Vote: 6-0-0-0
Yeas: 6 - Evans, George, Grayber, Lewis, Meek, Wright
Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued
Revenue: No revenue impact
Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates: 2/1, 2/3, 2/10

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. Outlines process for transferring remains, identity, and eligibility information of remains. Outlines responsibilities of county veterans' service officers in process. Outlines responsibility of entities that may be in possession of remains of indigent persons.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Providing deceased veterans with dignified burial
- Verifying the identity and veteran status of unclaimed cremains
- Burial benefits earned by veterans
- Use of columbaria for final interment of cremains

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND:

Cremation has become a more common option for the interment of human remains. The National Funeral Directors Association estimated that cremation was the option for 57.5 percent of deceased individuals in 2021, 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 include covering the cost of the burial.

There have been instances, both in Oregon and elsewhere, of the cremated remains of veterans being discovered and unclaimed, and thus 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 the eligibility of the individual for interment in a national cemetery, and arrange for the interment of the remains.