

HB 3421 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/7

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires that any official ceremony or other event held by state government to commemorate Memorial or Veterans Day be held on a legal holiday. Provides exception in cases where governor and two-thirds of each chamber of Legislative Assembly direct otherwise. Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to ensure that members of the public have access to attend, or participate in, official ceremonies or other such events. Requires director of Department to ensure that state-owned and state-maintained veterans' facilities, memorials, and war memorials, with the exception of state highways, are in clean condition and good repair for Memorial Day and Veterans Day, as well as for any other ceremony or other event that may be held to commemorate those two holidays. Directs the Department to report to interim legislative committees, by September 15 of each year, on the conditions of state-owned or state-maintained veterans facilities, memorials and war memorials.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Memorial Day traces its origins to 1868, when it was originally known as Decoration Day, intended to honor the Union soldiers who lost their lives during the Civil War. Prior to being observed nationally, there were several such recognition days held locally. The National Cemetery Association traces the origin to Columbus, Georgia, where the Ladies Memorial Association was formed to clean up the city's cemetery and, in the words of a letter published in the local newspaper, "to wreath the graves of our martyred dead with flowers." By 1890 the occurrence was held in every state, eventually leading Congress to declare the last Monday in May as Memorial Day.

Veterans Day also originated as a date of recognition with a different name. On November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson commemorated the one-year anniversary of the end of hostilities in what would later be known as World War I. The day was known as Armistice Day until the end of World War II, when General Dwight Eisenhower picked up on the idea of a veteran to dedicate the day to veterans of all wars, and later signed the bill as President in 1954.