

SB 658 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 2/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure modifies interview and written notice provisions regarding employment preferences for veterans applying to civil service positions. It allows jury trials for certain civil claims and specifies damages. It directs the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop a program to investigate and provide arbitration of claims for violations of veteran employment preference provisions.

Fiscal impact: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

Revenue impact: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

Detailed Summary:

Modifies provisions regarding veteran employment preference:

- Removes the existing interview exemption if duties of the civil service position in question are performed by only one person within the public employer's organization
- Requires public employers removing a veteran from consideration for a civil service position to provide them written notice within 3 business days
- Applies the above to positions first advertised or solicited on or after the measure's effective date

Adds provisions regarding civil claims alleging violations of veteran employment preference:

- Allows a jury trial at the request of any party
- Allows the prevailing plaintiff to recover noneconomic damages
- Prohibits awarding attorney fees or costs to a public employer

Directs the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to establish a program to investigate and provide nonbinding arbitration of claims alleging violations of veteran employment preference:

- Requires complaints to be filed within one year of the alleged violation, but only if the complaint has not already been filed with the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries, or if civil action alleging the same matters has not commenced in court
- Requires ODVA to investigate complaints and establish a process to gather evidence and direct dialogue
- Permits ODVA to adopt agency rules necessary for administration of these provisions, and permits ODVA to take action before the operative date of July 1, 2026 for preparation
- Requires public employers to conduct annual trainings on veteran employment preferences, which may be submitted to ODVA for approval
- Establishes that compliance with the annual training requirement is an affirmative defense to violation claims if the materials used in the most recent training had ODVA approval

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

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Existing statute establishes that public employers shall grant preferences to veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States who apply to vacant civil service positions, or who seek promotion to a civil service position, provided the individual meets any minimum and special qualifications. For scored applications, this provides a 5 percent bonus for veterans, which increases to 10 percent for disabled veterans. Public employers not appointing a veteran to a vacant civil service position must provide their reasons for the decision upon written request by the individual. The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries [provides](#) detailed summaries of preference requirements, and a link to file a complaint alleging violations.

Senate Bill 658 would modify these preference requirements, add provisions regarding civil claims alleging their violation, and direct the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish a program to investigate violation claims.