

HB 2845 -8 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Transportation

Meeting Dates: 2/6, 4/3, 4/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure creates the 2025 Oregon Veterans' Services Supplemental Investments Initiative.

Detailed Summary

- Appropriates no less than \$10,000,000 from the General Fund as measured in 2015 and adjusted for inflation to the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA).
- Creates eleven full-time positions at ODVA.
- Clarifies that the Director of ODVA shall be veteran who received a discharge or release under other than dishonorable conditions.
- Allows, with approval by the Governor, the Director of ODVA to hire a Deputy Director and establishes terms of the appointment.
- Requires ODVA to develop and implement pilot programs for suicide prevention and workforce prevention and award grants to entities involved with pairing suicide prevention and housing with workforce training.
- Requires ODVA to develop criteria for entities that provide suicide prevention and workforce training and preparation; establish rules, policies, and procedures for veterans to apply to these programs; and prioritize awarding grants to entities that provide opportunities for veterans to participate in the veterans' local communities.
- Allows ODVA to accept gifts, grants, and donations and use money in the Veterans Service Fund to development, implement and maintain the pilot programs.
- Authorizes ODVA to adopt rules to implement the provisions of the pilot programs.
- Requires the Oregon Department of Transportation to accept an identification card issued by the Department of Defense or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as proof of identity for non-Real ID licenses, permits, and identification.

Fiscal impact: TBD

Revenue impact: TBD

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Process of getting VA services and benefits
- Challenges that returning soldiers face, both in the past and in the present
- Previous bills that addressed veterans' services and their progress to date
- Questions about current ODVA services

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

- 8 Replaces original measure.
- Adds conforming statutes.
- Appropriates no less than \$10 million from the General Fund as measured in 2015 and adjusted for inflation as calculated by the Legislative Fiscal Office to the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA).
- Creates twelve full-time positions at the department; requires the director to establish, hire and staff four of these positions no later than July 1, 2028, three of the positions hired must be a coordinator for incarcerated veterans; an addiction services coordinator; and a veterans employment coordinator. Requires the director to

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hire the other remaining positions by July 1, 2027, and July 1, 2028.

- Establishes the Veterans Employment Coordinator at the department; defines responsibilities, including contacting Oregon National Guard members within two weeks of their date of separation and any service members separate from the Armed Forces who resides in or is moving to the state, within two weeks the coordinator is informed of their separation or move.
- Defines veteran and disabled veteran.
- Requires the department to develop and implement pilot programs for suicide prevention and workforce prevention and award grants through a proposal process to entities involved with pairing suicide prevention and housing with workforce training, including Courtney Place Veterans Housing.
- Clarifies that the Director shall be veteran who received a discharge or release under other than dishonorable conditions. With Governor approval, allows the Director of ODVA to hire a Deputy Director after consideration of their experience if they are a veteran.
- Requires the department to develop criteria for entities that provide suicide prevention and workforce training and preparation; establish rules, policies, and procedures for veterans to apply to these programs; and prioritize awarding grants to entities that provide opportunities for veterans to participate in the veterans' local communities.
- Allows the department to accept gifts, grants, and donations and use money in the Veterans Service Fund to develop, implement and maintain the pilot programs, including initial costs.
- Allows the department to adopt rules to implement the provisions of the pilot programs.
- Requires the department to report to the interim Legislative committees related to veterans to on the status of the pilot programs, no later than January 2, 2027.
- Amends the Veterans' Services Fund to require the department to not hold more than twelve percent of the fund in reserve.
- Amends the County Veterans Service Officer Program.
 - Requires the director to notify each county government of the amount of money to be distributed for the fiscal year; requires the county governing body to present a budget for the use of funds and report on funds expended at the end of each calendar quarter; requires the director to distribute a portion of funds allocated to counties based on the proportion of all moneys budgeted for all services provided by county veteran services officers that quarter; requires the director to use the distribution formula to each county that expended 90 percent or more of the money that the county budgets for services to distribute the remaining funds within 90 days of the last date of the fiscal year.
 - Allows the director to decrease program funds if there is a decrease in State Lottery Funds.
 - Requires the department to report to the interim Legislative committees related to veterans to on the distribution of funds process, no later than January 2, 2027.
- Amends county records for veteran discharge papers.
 - Adds power of attorney for the veteran to those able to request to inspect veteran discharge papers. Does not apply to records exempt from disclosure in ORS 192.355 or ORS 408.425
- Amends the Veteran Educational Bridge Grant program.
 - Removes the provision that veterans need to be eligible to receive federal, state, or other financial assistance based on prior Armed Forces service; or have a demonstrated need for student financial aid for a federal or state assistance program.
 - Adds the provision that veterans qualify for the program if they are experiencing a financial hardship that is interfering or endangering current enrollment in a degree, apprenticeship, or training program. Adds training to satisfactory progress requirement.
 - Raises grant maximum grant amount from \$5000 to \$10,000.
- Establishes a Veterans' Court Program in the department. Requires the department to work with the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and Attorney General to develop program plan. Requires the department provide a report to interim Legislative committees on Veterans on the plan no later than September 15, 2026.
- Declares emergency, effective on July 1, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

The mission of the ODVA is to honor and serve all Oregon veterans and their families by aligning and delivering earned benefits and services that enhance and improve their lives in recognition of their service to our nation. There are an estimated 266,690 veterans living in Oregon, having served across five major war eras.

PRELIMINARY