

**A-Engrossed**  
**House Bill 2845**

Ordered by the House April 15  
Including House Amendments dated April 15

Sponsored by Representatives EVANS, LEWIS, HELFRICH, MCLAIN, SKARLATOS; Representatives BOICE, ELMER, Senators MEEK, PATTERSON (Pre-session filed.)

**SUMMARY**

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure. The statement includes a measure digest written in compliance with applicable readability standards.

**Digest: Makes many changes to ODVA laws. (Flesch Readability Score: 73.8).**

*[Digest: Makes ODVA create more positions and hire staff. Makes ODVA create pilot programs on suicide prevention and workforce training. Makes ODOT accept an ID issued by USDOD or USDVA. (Flesch Readability Score: 65.7).]*

*[Requires an appropriation to]* **Declares that it is the goal of the Legislative Assembly to fund the Department of Veterans' Affairs [from the General Fund to be] in an amount that is not less than \$10,000,000, from the General Fund, in 2015 dollars, adjusted for inflation.**

Requires the Director of Veterans' Affairs to add additional full-time positions within the department. **Creates in the department the position of Veterans Employment Coordinator.**

*[Allows the director to appoint a deputy director, subject to approval by the Governor.]* Requires the director *[and deputy director]* to be a veteran who has received a discharge or release under other than dishonorable conditions. **Allows the director to appoint a deputy director, subject to approval by the Governor.**

Directs the department to develop and implement one or more pilot programs for suicide prevention and workforce training and preparation. Allows moneys in the Veterans' Services Fund to be used for the pilot programs.

*[Requires the Department of Transportation to accept, for issuing a driver license, an identification card issued by the United States Department of Defense or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.]*

**Directs the director to distribute moneys appropriated for county veterans' service officer programs on a quarterly basis. Directs the department to provide a report on the quarterly distribution process.**

**Changes who is allowed to request county veteran discharge records.**

**Increases from \$5,000 to \$10,000, the cap on the individual grant amount that is allowed under the Veteran Educational Bridge Grant Program.**

**Directs the Department of Veterans' Affairs to work with the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and the Judicial Department to develop a plan for establishing and maintaining a veterans' court in each county or judicial district.**

**Declares an emergency, effective July 1, 2025.**

**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

Relating to veterans; creating new provisions; amending ORS 192.390, 406.020, 406.140, 406.462, 408.115 and 408.425; and declaring an emergency.

**Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

**SECTION 1. This 2025 Act shall be known and may be cited as the 2025 Oregon Veterans' Services Supplemental Investments Initiative.**

**FUNDING GOAL**

**SECTION 2. It is the goal of the Legislative Assembly to fund the Department of Veterans' Affairs at a level that is no less than \$10,000,000, from the General Fund, as**

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 measured in 2015 and adjusted for inflation as calculated by the Legislative Fiscal Office.

2  
3 **ADDITIONAL STAFF POSITIONS**  
4

5 **SECTION 3.** (1) No later than the dates specified in subsections (2), (3) and (4) of this  
6 section, the Director of Veterans' Affairs shall establish, hire for and staff within the De-  
7 partment of Veterans' Affairs the following additional full-time equivalent positions:

8 (a) Two coordinators for incarcerated veterans.

9 (b) One women veterans coordinator.

10 (c) One addiction services coordinator.

11 (d) One behavioral health coordinator.

12 (e) One state approving agency staff.

13 (f) Two coordinators for houseless veterans.

14 (g) Two financial recovery ombudspersons.

15 (h) One bridge grant support coordinator.

16 (i) One veterans employment coordinator.

17 (2) The director shall establish, hire for and staff four of the positions listed in subsection  
18 (1) of this section no later than July 1, 2026. Three of the positions must be:

19 (a) One coordinator for incarcerated veterans.

20 (b) One addiction services coordinator.

21 (c) One veterans employment coordinator.

22 (3) The director shall establish, hire for and staff four of the remaining positions listed  
23 in subsection (1) of this section no later than July 1, 2027.

24 (4) The director shall establish, hire for and staff the four remaining positions listed in  
25 subsection (1) of this section no later than July 1, 2028.

26 **SECTION 4.** The position of Veterans Employment Coordinator is created in the De-  
27 partment of Veterans' Affairs. The responsibilities of the coordinator include, but are not  
28 limited to, all of the following:

29 (1) Assisting veterans with finding employment.

30 (2) Providing veterans with career and job resources.

31 (3) Serving as a liaison between the Department of Veterans' Affairs and county  
32 veterans' service officers.

33 (4) Contacting any service member who separates from the Oregon National Guard  
34 within two weeks from the date of separation.

35 (5) Contacting any service member who separates from the Armed Forces of the United  
36 States and who resides in or is moving into this state within two weeks from the date the  
37 coordinator is informed of the service member separating and residing in or moving into this  
38 state.

39  
40 **DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR**  
41

42 **SECTION 5.** ORS 406.020 is amended to read:

43 406.020. The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall be under the supervision and control of the  
44 Director of Veterans' Affairs. The Governor shall appoint the director subject to confirmation by  
45 the Senate in the manner provided in ORS 171.562 and 171.565. The appointment may not be made

1 without the written approval of the Advisory Committee provided for in ORS 406.210. The director  
2 shall be a veteran[,] **who received a discharge or release under other than dishonorable con-**  
3 **ditions**, chosen on the basis of executive and administrative ability.

4 **SECTION 6. The Director of Veterans' Affairs, subject to approval by the Governor, may**  
5 **appoint a deputy director. In appointing a deputy director, the director shall consider the**  
6 **experience that a veteran may bring if a veteran is appointed to the position. The deputy**  
7 **director serves at the pleasure of the director, has full authority to act for the director and**  
8 **is subject to the control of the director.**

9  
10 **VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION PILOT PROGRAMS**

11  
12 **SECTION 7. (1) As used in this section, "veteran" has the meaning given that term in**  
13 **ORS 408.225. "Veteran" includes a disabled veteran as defined in ORS 408.225.**

14 **(2) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall develop and implement one or more pilot**  
15 **programs for suicide prevention and workforce preparation. The purpose of the pilot pro-**  
16 **grams is to help veterans with suicide prevention and transition to the workforce and busi-**  
17 **ness community.**

18 **(3) The department shall implement the pilot programs under this section by awarding**  
19 **grants through a request for proposal process to:**

20 **(a) Entities involved in pairing suicide prevention and housing with workforce training**  
21 **and preparation in the agriculture, fishery, forestry or natural resources industries;**

22 **(b) Entities that provide temporary, low-barrier suicide prevention programs; and**

23 **(c) Courtney Place Veterans Housing.**

24 **(4) The department shall:**

25 **(a) Develop criteria for entities that provide programs for suicide prevention and**  
26 **workforce training and preparation;**

27 **(b) By rule, establish processes and procedures for veterans to apply for assistance from**  
28 **entities identified in subsection (3) of this section; and**

29 **(c) Prioritize awarding grants to entities that provide opportunities for veterans to par-**  
30 **ticipate in the veterans' local communities.**

31 **(5) The department may solicit and accept gifts, grants and donations from public and**  
32 **private sources to further the purposes of this section.**

33 **(6)(a) The department may use moneys in the Veterans' Services Fund established pur-**  
34 **suant to Article XV, section 4f, of the Oregon Constitution, to develop, implement and**  
35 **maintain the pilot programs under this section.**

36 **(b) The department shall use moneys in the Veterans' Services Fund established pursu-**  
37 **ant to Article XV, section 4f, of the Oregon Constitution, for the initial moneys used to de-**  
38 **velop, implement and maintain the pilot programs under this section.**

39 **(7) The department may adopt rules to implement the provisions of this section.**

40 **SECTION 8. Not later than January 2, 2027, the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall**  
41 **prepare and submit a report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related**  
42 **to veterans on the status of pilot programs developed and implemented under section 7 of**  
43 **this 2025 Act.**

44 **SECTION 9. (1) Section 7 of this 2025 Act is repealed on January 2, 2028.**

45 **(2) All moneys for the pilot programs developed and implemented under section 7 of this**

1 **2025 Act that are unexpended and unobligated on the date of the repeal of section 7 of this**  
2 **2025 Act shall revert to the Veterans' Services Fund and become available for use pursuant**  
3 **to Article XV, section 4f, of the Oregon Constitution.**

4  
5 **VETERANS' SERVICES FUND**  
6

7 **SECTION 10.** ORS 406.140 is amended to read:

8 406.140. There is established in the State Treasury, separate and distinct from the General Fund,  
9 the Veterans' Services Fund, to be administered by the Oregon Department of Administrative Ser-  
10 vices. Interest earned by the fund is credited to the fund. Pursuant to Article XV, section 4f, of the  
11 Oregon Constitution, one and one-half percent of the net proceeds from the Oregon State Lottery  
12 shall be deposited in the Veterans' Services Fund. All moneys transferred from the State Lottery  
13 Fund and all other moneys authorized to be transferred to the Veterans' Services Fund from what-  
14 ever source are appropriated continuously to provide services for the benefit of veterans. **The de-**  
15 **partment shall hold no more than 12 percent of the fund in reserve.**

16  
17 **COUNTY VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICER PROGRAM**  
18

19 **SECTION 11.** ORS 406.462 is amended to read:

20 406.462. (1) Moneys appropriated to the Director of Veterans' Affairs for the purposes described  
21 in ORS 406.450 must be distributed to county governing bodies and expended for the purposes of  
22 ORS 406.450 and may not be used to supplant moneys currently budgeted by the director for services  
23 provided by county veterans' service officers.

24 **(2) The director shall distribute moneys appropriated to the director for the purposes**  
25 **described in ORS 406.450 on a quarterly basis as follows:**

26 **(a) Each fiscal year, the director shall notify each county governing body of the amount**  
27 **of moneys to be distributed to the county governing body for the fiscal year.**

28 **(b) The county governing body shall provide the director a copy of the county's budget**  
29 **for the services to be provided by the county veterans' service officer for the fiscal year.**

30 **(c) At the end of each calendar quarter, the county governing body shall provide the di-**  
31 **rector a report on the moneys the county expended during the calendar quarter for the**  
32 **services provided by the county veterans' service officer.**

33 **(d) Upon receipt of the county governing body's quarterly report, the director shall dis-**  
34 **tribute to the county governing body a portion of moneys allocated to the county governing**  
35 **body in an amount that is based on the proportion of all moneys budgeted for all services**  
36 **provided by county veterans' service officers that were expended during the calendar quar-**  
37 **ter.**

38 **(e) At the end of each calendar quarter, the county governing body may also provide the**  
39 **director documentation for moneys the county expended during a previous calendar quarter**  
40 **in the fiscal year for the services provided by the county veterans' service officer that the**  
41 **county had not previously reported to the director and for which the county governing body**  
42 **has not received a distribution of moneys from the director. Upon receipt of the documen-**  
43 **tation, the director shall distribute to the county governing body a portion of moneys allo-**  
44 **cated to the county governing body in an amount that is based on the proportion of all**  
45 **moneys budgeted for all services provided by county veterans' service officers that were ex-**

1 **pended during the calendar quarter within which the county expended the moneys for which**  
2 **the county governing body provided the director documentation.**

3 **(3) At the end of each fiscal year, the director shall calculate the remaining moneys not**  
4 **distributed during the fiscal year and distribute the remaining moneys using a formula es-**  
5 **tablished under ORS 406.454 to each county governing body that expended 90 percent or more**  
6 **of the moneys that the county budgeted for services provided by the county veterans' service**  
7 **officer for the fiscal year as specified under subsection (2)(b) of this section. The director**  
8 **shall distribute the remaining moneys within 90 days from the last date of the fiscal year.**

9 [(2)] (4) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, the director may reduce the amount of  
10 moneys distributed to county governing bodies for county veterans' service officers if there is a de-  
11 crease in the amount of General Fund **or State Lottery Fund** revenues appropriated to the director  
12 for the purposes described in ORS 406.450 for the same period of time.

13 **SECTION 12. Not later than January 2, 2027, the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall**  
14 **prepare and submit a report to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related**  
15 **to veterans and the Association of Oregon Counties on the distribution of moneys under the**  
16 **process provided by the amendments to ORS 406.462 by section 11 of this 2025 Act.**

17  
18 **COUNTY RECORDS: VETERAN DISCHARGE PAPERS**

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20 **SECTION 13.** ORS 408.425 is amended to read:

21 408.425. (1) Each county clerk who receives a request to inspect veteran discharge papers that  
22 are recorded under ORS 408.420 shall produce the recorded discharge papers for inspection if:

23 (a) The request for inspection is made in writing;

24 (b) The request sets forth the name, address and telephone number of the requester;

25 (c) The request sets forth the name and the date of birth or the last four digits of the Social  
26 Security number of the veteran; and

27 (d) The request is made by:

28 (A) The veteran or [*the spouse, legal guardian*] **a person holding a power of attorney for the**  
29 **veteran** or personal representative of the veteran; **or**

30 [*(B) A county veterans' service officer appointed under ORS 408.410;*]

31 [*(C) A representative of the Department of Veterans' Affairs; or*]

32 [*(D)*] **(B)** A licensed funeral establishment seeking to ascertain if a decedent was a veteran for  
33 the purpose of obtaining veteran's burial benefits.

34 (2) This section does not create a cause of action and may not be asserted as the basis of a per  
35 se negligence claim.

36 (3) Each county clerk may adopt additional policies in order to protect recorded discharge pa-  
37 pers from malicious or unlawful use and policies regarding copying of recorded discharge papers.

38 (4) Each county clerk shall maintain in the records of the county clerk a copy of each request  
39 for inspection of recorded discharge information for a period of at least 10 years after the date the  
40 request is received by the county clerk.

41 **SECTION 14.** ORS 192.390 is amended to read:

42 192.390. (1) Notwithstanding ORS 192.338, 192.345 and 192.355 and except as otherwise provided  
43 in ORS 192.398, public records that are more than 25 years old shall be available for inspection.

44 **(2) This section does not apply to records that are exempt from disclosure pursuant to**  
45 **ORS 192.355 (37) or 408.425.**

**VETERAN EDUCATIONAL BRIDGE GRANT PROGRAM**

**SECTION 15.** ORS 408.115 is amended to read:

408.115. (1) The Veteran Educational Bridge Grant Program is established within the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Under the program, the department shall conduct outreach and provide grants to veterans who:

(a) Are pursuing and enrolled in a course of study that is in or part of:

(A) Any program for which United States Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits may be used;

(B) A career school licensed under ORS 345.010 to 345.340;

(C) An apprenticeship program that is registered with the State Apprenticeship and Training Council; or

(D) An on-the-job training program offered by a public employer;

*[(b)(A) Are eligible to receive federal, state or other financial assistance based on prior service in the Armed Forces of the United States; or]*

*[(B) Demonstrate a need for student financial aid from any federal or state assistance program, including Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965;]*

*[(c)(A)]* (b)(A) Are unable to complete a degree, apprenticeship or training program within the expected completion period because one or more required courses or apprenticeship or training hours are not available until a later date; *[or]*

(B) Have debt on a student account due to an overpayment of federal or state tuition benefits or prior course withdrawal that prevents enrollment in a future term; *[and] or*

**(C) Are experiencing an instance of financial hardship that is interfering with or could endanger the ability to remain enrolled in a degree, apprenticeship or training program; and**

*[(d)]* (c) Are making satisfactory academic **or training** progress *[or progress]* in a program described in paragraph (a) of this subsection.

(2) Grants under the program:

(a) May not exceed *[\$5,000]* **\$10,000** per veteran; and

(b) May be made only when there are sufficient moneys in the Veteran Educational Bridge Grant Program Fund established under ORS 408.125 to make the grants.

(3) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall adopt rules for the implementation and operation of the program, including eligibility requirements for grant applicants.

(4) As used in this section, "veteran" has the meaning given that term in ORS 408.225 and includes disabled veterans, as defined in ORS 408.225.

**VETERANS' COURT**

**SECTION 16.** (1) **The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall work with the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and the Judicial Department to develop a plan for establishing and maintaining a veterans' court in each county or judicial district.**

**(2) The Judicial Department shall submit a report on the plan in the manner provided by ORS 192.245, and may include recommendations for legislation, to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to veterans no later than September 15, 2026.**

**(3) As used in this section, "veterans' court" means a specialized court or court program for defendants who are military veterans.**

