



Representative Phil Barnhart (HD-11)

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Barnhart pushes legislation to help Oregonians in Armed Forces

Veteran Eugene legislator supports programs to ease financial burdens

SALEM—Rep. Phil Barnhart (D-Eugene) urged the Senate General Government Committee Tuesday to enact five bills aimed at helping members of the Armed Forces, including Oregon National Guard members.

Barnhart told the senators that he shares their “reverence for the sacrifices that our valiant young citizens make when they enter the Armed Forces and the National Guard—the time away from their families and friends; the financial sacrifice of leaving their jobs and careers; and yes, their very lives and limbs.” Barnhart told the committee that the surviving family deserves the tuition-waiver provided for in one of the bills, SB 486.

Barnhart also supports a bill to increase the maximum veteran’s home loan amount to 100 percent of the net appraised value of the home. He urged senators to create an Oregon Military Emergency Financial Relief Program and a fund to support it, along with an Oregon National Guard Memorial Program and an extension of tuition credits for surviving families. Barnhart called for expanding county programs to help veterans find out what federal benefits are available to them.

In written testimony, Barnhart said he and his House colleagues on the Veterans Affairs have started working on other bills to help veterans, and he asked for the Senate’s help in passing them. These include the following:

- A bill to make reenlistment bonuses nontaxable. Presently, the federal government does not tax reenlistment bonus, but the state of Oregon does.
- A bill to allow any deployed member of the Armed Forces to defer property taxes for the year of deployment, until that person sells his or her home. Barnhart wants to model this

provision on the tax deferral allowed for senior citizens, but he would impose no means test.

- A bill to apply the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force’s “Renter Tax Credit” to any veteran who meets the income guidelines that the Task Force set. “It seems that allowing a tax credit for rent is the very least we can do for those who sacrifice so much on our behalf, often while experiencing real financial hardship,” Barnhart said.
- A bill to set up a state fund that reimburses local governments for transportation programs to help veterans and active-duty members. These include bus passes, gasoline vouchers and other benefits.

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