



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Historic Veterans' Budget Approved in Bipartisan Vote

HB 5039 significantly boosts funding for veterans' services

In a bipartisan vote, the Oregon House of Representatives today voted to approve a historic budget for veterans' services that fulfills the promises of Measure 96, which passed in the November 2016 election.

The budget bill, [House Bill 5039](#), establishes a \$509.9 million total funds budget for the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, a 14.7% increase from the previous budget. Of that, \$8.5 million is allocated from the General Fund, and \$18.7 million is from the Lottery Fund, following the decisive passage of Measure 96 last year. That measure was the result of House Joint Resolution 202, co-sponsored by Rep. Paul Evans (D-Monmouth), dedicating 1.5% of lottery funds to veterans' outreach and services.

The funding will also be supplemented by an additional \$2.5 million for veterans' mental health care services through the Oregon Health Authority's budget, and an anticipated \$2.5 million in support for capital investments at Oregon's two veterans' homes. These expenditures will be in separate bills.

"Serving our nation's veterans is both a joy and a privilege," says Rep. David Gomberg (D-Central Coast), who co-chairs the budget committee that worked on the bill. "I am proud of all the hard work that staff, advocates, and my fellow legislators have done to get where we are today. This budget honors Oregonians' promise to our veterans and makes meaningful steps forward in supporting the tangible needs of the men and women who have served and sacrificed on our behalf."

The veterans' services budget will double the current support for County Veteran Service Officers and National Service Organizations, which helps connect veterans' to the services they need and deserve. It will also fund a veterans' crisis and suicide prevention hotline and address veterans' housing and homelessness issues.

"While there is more work to accomplish before this Legislature adjourns – especially around veterans' homelessness and housing security – there can be no doubt that this vote was historic," says Rep. Evans. "No other state government has even attempted what Oregon accomplished today. Oregonians voted for a significant increase in veterans' services this past November and today we put the foundation in place for a comprehensive series of investments that will transform veterans' services for decades to come."

HB 5039 passed 37-18 and will move to the Senate.

Later this afternoon, the House is scheduled to vote on two other bills protecting veterans: House Bill 2891, which establishes the Department of Veterans' Affairs Veteran Services Grant Fund, and HB 2908, creating the position of Veteran Volunteer Coordinator at the ODVA.

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