
2017 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION



VETERANS



VETERANS MEASURES

Access to Recreation

Enacted: SB 116

Not Enacted: SB 380-A

Education/Workforce

Enacted:

Not Enacted: HB 2690, HB 2887-A

General Veterans Policy

Enacted: SB 80, SB 1055, HB 2100,
HB 2908, HB 3207

Not Enacted: HJM 10

Grant and Loan Programs

Enacted: SB 143, HB 2891

Not Enacted: HB 3174

Health Care

Enacted: SB 81

Not Enacted: SB 1054-A

POW/MIA

Enacted: HB 2149, HB 2880

Not Enacted:

Picture: Lewis and Clark Bridge, Columbia County - [Gary Halvorson, Oregon State Archives](#)

VETERANS

TASK FORCES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The following bills created task forces and reporting requirements. Additional information is provided in the bill summaries.

SB 143	Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to evaluate the implementation of grant programs seeking to enhance campus veteran resource centers. Requires report to the legislative committees related to veterans.	September 15, 2018
HB 2908	Directs Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to evaluate the implementation of the Veteran Volunteer Coordinator and Veterans Volunteer Program. Requires report to the legislative committees related to veterans.	September 15, 2020

[Senate Bill 80](#)

Effective Date: January 1, 2018

Assistance for Native American Veterans

At the request of: Governor Brown for Department of Veterans' Affairs

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Background and Current Law: Native Americans serve in the United States Armed Forces at rates higher than any other ethnic group and the highest concentration of active female service members in the armed forces are Native American. Oregon has more than 100,000 members of nine federally recognized Tribes within the state's borders and approximately 3,800 tribal members are veterans.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 80 recognizes the service of Native American veterans and directs the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to assist with the accreditation of tribal veterans' representatives by the federal government.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 311

[Senate Bill 81](#)

Effective Date: January 1, 2018

Health Care Navigation

At the request of: Governor Brown for Department of Veterans' Affairs

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Background and Current Law: Individuals who are isolated or elderly, or who have mobility or complex health issues, often face increased barriers to receiving health care. There is an emerging profession to help such people navigate the health care system, called Patient Advocates or Health Navigators. These individuals have expertise working with social service agencies, medical and behavioral health providers, and the insurance industry. Veterans face similar barriers, along with additional challenges, accessing care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Although assistance is available through the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), its primary focus is to provide access to and advocacy for federal and state benefits, such as compensation and pensions, by processing claims and appeals and making referrals to state and local resources.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 81 authorizes the ODVA to assist veterans with obtaining health care, including mental health care, through federal, state, or local health care delivery systems.

Oregon Laws: Chapter 478

[Senate Bill 116](#)

Effective Date: January 1, 2017

Access to Recreation

Chief Sponsors: Sens. Olsen, Riley

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Background and Current Law: Oregon offers a range of outdoor recreational opportunities, which attracts veterans and other residents alike. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife currently offers a permanent combined hunting and fishing license for qualifying disabled veterans, and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) provides free day use and camping at RV and tent sites for disabled veterans year round and for United States Armed Forces active duty personnel on leave on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 116 provides disabled veterans, and active duty personnel on leave, free access to recreation areas on state forest lands, by directing the Oregon Department of Forestry to honor the access pass already issued by OPRD.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 729

[Senate Bill 143](#)

Effective Date: August 15, 2017

Grant Programs for Campus Veteran Resource Centers

Chief Sponsors: Sens. Monnes Anderson, Boquist

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: Transitioning from military to civilian life can present challenges for veterans. Supporting veterans' educational and employment goals are two ways the transition can be made easier, with federal and state benefits available to encourage enrollment in public universities and community colleges. Veterans are generally atypical students in many ways: they are older than their peers, have families, and have a different perspective that comes only from serving in the armed forces. Universities and colleges often have on-campus resource centers tailored to help veterans succeed, connect to other veterans, and ground them within the broader collegiate environment.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 143 appropriates approximately \$1.2 million from the Veterans' Services Fund to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop and implement one or more competitive grant programs. The funding is for community colleges and public universities to support and expand on-campus veteran resource centers.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 731

[Senate Bill 380-A](#)

Not Enacted

Access to Recreation

Chief Sponsors: Sen. Hansell

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: Oregon offers a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities, which attracts veterans and other residents alike. Efforts have been made to ensure veterans in Oregon can fully participate in outdoor recreational activities throughout the state. Currently, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offers a permanent combined hunting and fishing license for qualifying disabled veterans, and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) provides free day use and camping at RV and tent sites for United States Armed Forces active duty personnel on leave on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day, and year-round for service-connected disabled veterans.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 380-A would have required OPRD to set aside a certain number of reservable campsites for disabled veterans during the first 30 days that reservations may be made.

[Senate Bill 1054-A](#)

Not Enacted

Improving Access to Behavioral Health Services

At the request of: Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Senate Rules

Background and Current Law: Data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the United States Census Bureau rank Oregon among the states with the highest rates of serious depression and suicide. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death among Oregonians under age 35, with over 760 suicides in 2015 and around 2,000 people hospitalized for associated behaviors. Veterans represent a little more than eight percent of Oregon's total population, but account for nearly 25 percent of the total number of people who commit suicide, and suicide is the leading cause of death for veterans under the age of 45. According to the Oregon Violent Death Reporting System, mental health concerns, alcohol and/or substance use, relationship issues, and other stressors are common and associated with suicide incidents among Oregon veterans. Hospitals seeking to expand their services in Oregon are required to obtain a "certificate of need" from OHA. Obtaining the certificate is a lengthy and costly process designed to promote efficiencies across Oregon's system of care and help keep health care costs down.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 1054-A would have made a temporary exemption available to hospitals that would otherwise be required to obtain a certificate of need, but only to increase capacity to provide behavioral health services to veterans and active duty personnel. The measure would have made an exemption available for two years and required facilities taking advantage of it to provide services for at least eight years.

Third-party Visitation for Children of Deployed Parents

At the request of: Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Committees: Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Judiciary

Background and Current Law: The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that legislation to address issues facing military parents has become a trend over the past decade at both the state and federal level. Domestic relations matters come within the purview of each state; the only applicable federal provisions are contained in the Servicemember Civil Relief Act (SCRA), which allows service members to stay a variety of court proceedings, including domestic relations matters, whenever military service precludes their appearance in court. In addition to protections offered by the SCRA, nearly every state has enacted domestic relations provisions that address custody issues faced by deployed parents, including Oregon. In 2011, the legislature passed House Bill 3162 to prohibit courts from changing parenting and support orders involving deployed parents; modifications may be made to accommodate a parent's active military service, so long as they are in a child's best interest. In 2012, the Uniform Law Commission developed the Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act, a version of which has been adopted in about a dozen states. The "child's best interest" remains the overriding standard for courts making custody determinations in every state.

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 1055 allows a deployed parent, during the deployment, to petition a court for visitation between the child of the deployed parent and a stepparent, grandparent, or other family member related to the child. The bill directs the court to consider whether such a visitation would facilitate contact between the child and the deployed parent, the best interests of the child, and existing statutory factors that govern third-party visitation.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 534

[House Bill 2100](#)

Effective Date: October 6, 2017

Medal of Honor Highway

Chief Sponsors: Reps. Huffman, Whisnant; Sens. Johnson, Knopp

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Background and Current Law: The Medal of Honor is the nation’s highest award for military valor. Oregon has been home to 26 Medal of Honor recipients, from the Civil War to Vietnam. Currently, only one recipient is living in Oregon, who is also the nation’s oldest Medal of Honor recipient.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2100 designates a portion of U.S. Highway 20 between Newport, Oregon and the Idaho state line the “Oregon Medal of Honor Highway,” and directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to install and maintain signage identifying it as such. The bill authorizes additional signage at rest areas and turnarounds to honor Oregon’s 26 Medal of Honor recipients by name.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 380

[House Bill 2149](#)

Effective Date: January 1, 2018

One-time Car Registration

Chief Sponsors: Rep. Johnson

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Senate Business and Transportation

Background and Current Law: In Oregon, ordinary passenger car registration currently costs \$86 every two years. The registration fee varies for other types of vehicles. Currently, there are 33 former Prisoner of War (POW) registrations.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2149 allows POWs to pay a one-time \$15 vehicle registration fee, and relieves POWs who previously paid the fee from the obligation to renew. The bill also authorizes the transfer of a valid registration to a surviving spouse of a former POW.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 62

Loans to Bridge Gaps in Educational Assistance

Chief Sponsors: Rep. Evans

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: There are a variety of federal and state programs that assist veterans with educational goals, including the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but gaps can sometimes occur when receipt of benefits is delayed.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2690 would have established the Oregon Educational and Workforce Development Bridge Loan Program in the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide forgivable loans to eligible veterans of up to \$5,000 each in any five-year period to cover gaps in other financial assistance.

POW/MIA Flag Display

Chief Sponsors: Reps. Esquivel, Evans, Whisnant

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Senate Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Background and Current Law: Oregon law requires the Oregon state flag and the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag to be displayed with the United States flag on public buildings. Public buildings include state institutions, county courthouses and all other state buildings that the Oregon Department of Administrative Services determines are capable of displaying the three flags.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2880 expands the definition of "public building" to include county, municipal, school district, and special district buildings upon which it is customary and suitable to display the United States flag, so that the Oregon State flag and POW/MIA flag will also be displayed. The measure directs that new construction after January 1, 2018, include the infrastructure to display all three flags simultaneously.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 269

Job Tax Credit

At the request of: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Revenue

Background and Current Law: The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to certain nonprofit organizations for hiring specified individuals, including veterans, who may face barriers to employment. The WOTC only applies to new employees and is a one-time credit per employer.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2887-A would have created a personal and corporate tax credit for up to three years against state income taxes for hiring qualified veterans. The credit would have been in the amount of \$750 to \$1,000 depending on the number of the business' employees, provided the employer pays at least \$1 more than the applicable minimum wage. The tax credit would have increased \$100 annually.

Grant Program for General Assistance

At the request of: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) administers a wide variety of programs for the more than 326,000 veterans in Oregon, including their spouses and dependents.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2891 establishes the ODVA Veterans Services Grant Fund and permits ODVA, with approval of the advisory committee related to veterans, to award grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$250,000 per recipient for a variety of purposes that serve veterans. Funding may come from the General Fund, the Oregon State Lottery Fund, donations, and other sources.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 664

[House Bill 2908](#)

Effective Date: August 8, 2017

Volunteer Coordinator

Chief Sponsors: Reps. Piluso, Parrish

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: Oregon is home to many dedicated volunteers who work with veterans and advocate veterans’ issues. There are also a number of nonprofit entities operating in Oregon organized around serving veterans. Individual volunteers and nonprofit organizations are valuable resources and partners with the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) that connect Oregon’s community of veterans.

Bill Summary: House Bill 2908 creates the position of Veteran Volunteer Coordinator at ODVA to centralize communication and coordination with ODVA’s volunteer partners. The bill specifies the responsibilities of the position and requires ODVA to report to the Legislative Assembly no later than September 15, 2020, on the coordinator position and the impact of the volunteer program.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 665

[House Bill 3174](#)

Not Enacted

Grant Program for Construction-Related Job Assistance

Chief Sponsors: Reps. Evans, Meek

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: A variety of employment-related assistance is available to veterans. State and federal law provide preference points to veterans and disabled veterans seeking employment in the public sector. The Oregon Employment Department operates employment centers and provides Local Veteran Employment Representatives and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists to assist veterans with education and training opportunities, searching for employment, job counseling, job development, and resume assistance.

Bill Summary: House Bill 3174 would have provided additional assistance to veterans by creating a grant program administered by the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs that funded pilot projects targeting the employment of veterans in construction and construction materials industries.

[House Bill 3207](#)

Effective Date: January 1, 2017

Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway

Chief Sponsors: Sens. Girod; Rep. Sprenger

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, Joint Ways and Means

Background and Current Law: The United States government engaged in atmospheric and underwater nuclear weapons testing from July 16, 1945, to November 4, 1962, exposing an estimated 200,000 or more United States military service members to unsafe levels of radiation. These veterans became known as atomic veterans. These veterans were unable to discuss their exposure until nuclear weapons testing was declassified many years later. Many veterans died before they could seek treatment and tell their stories.

Bill Summary: House Bill 3207 designates Interstate 5 between Albany, Oregon and Salem, Oregon the Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway.

Oregon Laws 2017: Chapter 675

[House Joint Memorial 10](#)

Not Adopted

Memorial to Congress Regarding National Guard and Reservist Benefits

Chief Sponsors: Rep. Evans

Committees: House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, House Rules

Background and Current Law: The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) expanded the authority of the United States Department of Defense to deploy state National Guard and Reserve personnel to augment active duty armed forces. Oregon has no active duty military bases, but thousands of National Guard and Reserve personnel call Oregon home and mobilize when called. National Guard and Reserve personnel do not receive the same benefits as full-time service members.

Bill Summary: House Joint Memorial 10 would have urged Congress and the President to sign legislation to extend benefits to deployed National Guard and Reserve personnel similar to those received by active duty service members.