

VETERANS



EMPLOYMENT

During 2021, Oregon’s legislature evaluated several measures regarding the employment of veterans. A significant change involved the treatment of veterans’ preference scoring and public employment.

Eligible veterans receive preference in public employment at state and federal levels in recognition of the potential economic sacrifices and civilian career delays that may result from their service in the Armed Forces. Potential public employers, within certain guidelines, add "preference" points to veterans and disabled veterans engaged in the public employment hiring process for vacant civil service positions or certain promotions to civil service positions. The preference seeks to restore veterans to competitive positions in public employment. Previously, for the preference to apply, a veteran must have been discharged under honorable conditions, as defined by rules adopted by the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA).

The passage of [Senate Bill 184](#) modifies eligibility requirements to claim veterans’ preference in public employment by allowing otherwise eligible veterans to certify they expect to be discharged under honorable conditions within 120 days. For more clarity and parity in application scoring, the measure also addresses potential public employer scoring for veteran applicants by replacing the use of “preference” point in scoring with “percentage” point.

HOUSING

During the 2021 session, legislators employed a unique approach to resolving certain housing issues by reviewing the definition of “veteran” in Oregon statute. Policymakers assessed the necessity of modifying the current state statutory definition of a veteran to broaden veteran access to housing related services. Their discussions resulted in the passage of [House Bill 2094](#) (HB 2094). The measure authorizes

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See the **2021 Legislative Summary Report** for [Veterans](#), which highlights policy measures that received a public hearing during Oregon’s 2021 Regular Legislative Session.

the Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Department to define “veteran” by rule of the Oregon Housing Fund programs. Under the newly established provisions of HB 2094, individuals legally identified by the United States Veterans’ Administration, who may have been discharged for circumstances such as pregnancy or “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policies, may be permitted to access certain OHCS programs and supports.

HEALTH CARE

A measure related to veteran health care also received attention during the 2021 legislative session. [House Bill 2139](#) (HB 2139), statutorily establishes the Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant Program (RVHT) within the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA). The program was initially created in 2019 through a budgetary line item of the ODVA 2019-2021 Legislatively Adopted Budget and implemented collaboratively through a partnership between ODVA and the Oregon Department of Transportation. With a one-time \$500,000 allocation in 2019, RVHT aimed to supplement and broaden services provided through a federal grant program called the United States Department of Veterans

Affairs' Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program (USDVA H RTP). ODVA has administered the USDVA H RTP grant to ten Oregon counties for about seven years.

Under the program created by HB 2139, ODVA is authorized to provide grants to assist with the transportation of rural veterans to health care services. It allows grants for transportation regardless of whether care being received is covered by any federal benefit plan. HB 2139 also deems federally recognized Indian tribes of Oregon eligible to receive grants.

2011, the Legislative Assembly established a Roadside Memorial Fund to receive and allocate moneys to the Oregon Department of Transportation to erect memorial signs honoring law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. In 2013, the Legislative Assembly expanded the program to provide for roadside memorials in honor of fallen members of the Armed Forces. Through the passage of HB 2700, statutory provisions concerning veterans killed in action are expanded to include those veterans formerly designated as prisoners of war or unaccounted for by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

MEMORIALS

The public park surrounding Oregon's Capitol building houses monuments, statues, and dedications, including memorials honoring servicemembers and their families, such as the Medal of Honor Memorials and the World War II Memorial near the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Garden.

Through [Senate Bill 319](#), the state will designate a portion of the state Capitol grounds for the installment of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Before the passage of this measure, no state-designated memorial site existed for the Vietnam War.

Another measure that passed during the 2021 session was [House Bill 2644](#) (HB 2644). This bill recognizes veterans who participated in atomic cleanup and decontamination efforts between 1962 and 1980 of nuclear testing sites in the Marshall Islands. HB 2644 designates a portion of Highway 5, beginning in Albany and ending in Salem, previously called the Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway, to be renamed the Atomic Veterans and Atomic Cleanup Veterans Memorial Highway. The passage of HB 2644 coincided with several federal initiatives filed in 2021 during the 117th Congress recognizing radiation-exposed servicemembers who participated in cleanup efforts at Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands for the presumption of service-connected disabilities.

The 2021 legislative session also produced [House Bill 2700 \(HB 2700\)](#) to expand one of Oregon's commemorative traditions of erecting roadside memorial signs to honor fallen servicemembers. In

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