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Oregon Senate votes to set up fund for Veterans' Services

SB 140 establishes provisions needed to implement Measure 96

SALEM – The Oregon Senate took the first steps in carrying out the will of Oregon's voters, who overwhelmingly passed Ballot Measure 96 to fund veterans' services in the state.

Senate Bill 140 – which passed on a 28-0 vote today on the Senate floor – establishes the Veterans' Services Fund and creates other statutory provisions that are necessary to implement the direction of voters who supported Ballot Measure 96. The measure passed with 84 percent of the vote in the November 2016 General Election.

"We are doing the people's bidding by establishing this fund that will be dedicated exclusively to veterans' services statewide," said Sen. Rod Monroe (D-Portland), who carried the bill in the Senate. "These individuals have sacrificed their time and personal health and risked their lives in our defense. We owe them a debt of gratitude, and that includes taking care of them by providing the services they need when they come home."

The ballot measure requires that 1.5 percent of net Lottery proceeds go to fund veterans' services in Oregon. The constitutional amendment also directed the Legislature to establish a Veterans' Services Fund so that those funds are segregated appropriately and are not used for any other purpose.

Senate Bill 140 enacts the provisions of the ballot measure by establishing the restricted fund that will allow the Legislature to distribute lottery money and meet the ballot measure's requirements. The Office of Economic Analysis forecasts that about \$18.7 million in Lottery funds will be dedicated to funding veterans' services in the 2017-19 biennium, and that money

will become available in July. Any funds that remain unspent or uncommitted by the end of the biennium must stay in that fund for veterans' services.

Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), who herself is a military veteran, is a chief sponsor of the bill.

"The voters of Oregon have spoken loud and clear, and they said that we must do more for our veterans," Monnes Anderson said. "This bill puts the voters' will into motion by creating a fund that is untouchable for anything but services to our veterans. We have taken many steps this session to help veterans and this is a big one. We owe our veterans for their service to their state and nation to keep us safe and free."

Senate Bill 140 now goes to the House of Representatives.

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