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Senate approves creation of Veterans' Transportation Task Force

Group will look at ways to increase access to health care for veterans in rural Oregon

SALEM – A piece of legislation that was recommended by the Governor's Task Force of Veterans' Services was unanimously passed by the Senate this morning. SB 98 creates the Veterans' Transportation Task Force, charged with exploring obstacles and recommending solutions to the issues veterans face in accessing health care services. The primary health care facility offered to veterans is located in Portland, presenting logistical challenges to many veterans who live outside the metropolitan area – particularly for those veterans who are wheelchair bound or otherwise physically disabled.

“Rural veterans need to be able to access quality health care as much as anybody,” said Senator Martha Schrader (D-Canby), who carried the bill on the floor and served on the Governor's Task Force. “The group I worked with throughout 2008 submitted this proposal because we identified a real problem for veterans throughout the state. I think that by creating a task force specifically to look at the issues of veterans and transportation, we should be able to come up with some ideas on how to ensure everyone who serves their country has reasonable access to the services they're entitled to.”

The Task Force will consist of members from the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Department of Human Services, and the Adjutant General. SB 98 directs them to “study the methods for creating a statewide transportation system to assist veterans in accessing health care facilities.”

“We have a moral obligation to take care of those who have served our country,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), chair of the Senate Health Care & Veterans' Affairs Committee. “While there are obstacles to making sure they receive the services they need, we are committed to finding solutions that work for all Oregonians, both urban and rural.”

SB 98 will now move to the House for consideration.

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