



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Legislation encouraging outreach to veterans passes in Senate *SB 241 requires state agencies to make a better effort offering services*

SALEM – The Senate voted in support of a bill this morning that requires state agencies to make reasonable efforts to identify and offer service to veterans. By asking Oregonians if they are a veteran and providing information to them about claiming federal benefits when they come into contact with a state agency, SB 241 seeks to help more veterans take advantage of the programs available to assist them while more equally distributing the costs between the state and federal government.

“SB 241 creates a proactive approach to outreach by requiring state agencies to ask Oregonians if they are a veteran,” said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5), the chief sponsor of the bill. “This is a good bill to ensure that our veterans receive necessary benefits.”

The proposal for SB 241 came from the Governor’s Task Force on Veterans, created in 2008. The task force identified a reoccurring problem where some men and women returning from service do not receive certain benefits because agencies have not identified them as veterans. The Task Force recommended that a “No Wrong Door” approach for veterans is the best method of engaging state agencies. This will require agencies to provide information to veterans about federal benefits as they come into contact with different state entities.

“We have to do more to make sure that Oregon’s veterans are getting access to the assistance that they are entitled to.” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham), also a sponsor of SB 241. “We are morally obligated to do the absolute best we can to reach out to these men and women in uniform who have sacrificed on our behalf.”

Senate Bill 241 also seeks to expand outreach to veterans by including food pantries and food banks as entities required to share contact information and materials about veterans’ benefits. Many veterans, particularly those who are homeless, use food banks or pantries and may be more easily reached in that context.

Today’s legislation is a complement to House Bill 3104 from 2009. That bill required printed cards to be placed in state offices for visiting veterans to pick up and mail to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. Over 150,000 cards were delivered to state agencies. Only about 4,000 have since been returned. SB 241 adds an active approach by requiring state agencies to ask if a client is a veteran.

The bill now goes to the House for consideration.

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