

Senate Bill 1100

Sponsored by Senator COURTNEY, Representative MINNIS; Senators BROWN, FERRIOLI, Representatives MERKLEY, SCOTT

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Directs Director of Veterans' Affairs to establish program to enhance and expand services provided by county veterans' service officers. Authorizes director to establish by rule certification process for officers. Requires that director adopt by rule funding distribution formula for disbursement of moneys to county governing bodies. Establishes conditions under which county governing body may reduce amount of moneys appropriated by county governing body to county veterans' service officers.

Creates Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Program and Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund.

Directs Department of Revenue to establish charitable checkoff on personal income tax return forms or instructions for checkoff contributions to Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Program. Directs that contributions shall be deposited in Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund.

Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to benefits for performing military service; creating new provisions; amending ORS 305.749
3 and 305.753; appropriating money; and prescribing an effective date.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1. Sections 2 to 5 of this 2005 Act are added to and made a part of ORS chapter**
6 **406.**

7 **SECTION 2. (1) The Director of Veterans' Affairs shall establish a program to enhance**
8 **and expand the services provided by county veterans' service officers appointed under ORS**
9 **408.410.**

10 **(2) The program shall:**

11 **(a) Conduct outreach and provide veterans and their spouses and dependents with:**

12 **(A) Information regarding veterans' benefit programs and other benefit programs; and**

13 **(B) Assistance by trained, accredited representatives in applying for all federal and state**
14 **veterans' benefits and aid to which veterans and their spouses and dependents may be enti-**
15 **tled on account of their military service and in appealing any denial of veterans' benefits or**
16 **aid;**

17 **(b) Develop and offer informational materials and training opportunities for county vet-**
18 **erans' service officers;**

19 **(c) Develop a comprehensive and coordinated statewide network of information and re-**
20 **ferred resources for veterans and their spouses and dependents;**

21 **(d) Ensure that the receipt of veterans' benefits or aid does not adversely impact other**
22 **benefits or aid that a veteran or the spouse or dependent of a veteran may be receiving or**
23 **may be eligible to receive; and**

24 **(e) Facilitate coordination of computer systems to ensure the seamless transfer of in-**

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 formation.

2 **SECTION 3.** The Director of Veterans' Affairs may establish by rule a certification pro-
 3 gram for veterans' service officers appointed under ORS 408.410 and other individuals pro-
 4 viding similar services to ensure their competency. The program curriculum shall provide
 5 the training and education necessary to allow veterans' service officers and other individuals
 6 to assist veterans and their spouses and dependents in applying for all federal and state
 7 veterans' benefits and aid to which veterans and their spouses and dependents may be enti-
 8 tled and in appealing any denial of veterans' benefits or aid. The curriculum shall include,
 9 but need not be limited to, training and education in the following areas:

10 (1) Applicable federal, state and local laws providing benefits or aid for veterans and their
 11 spouses and dependents and other benefits or aid for which veterans or their spouses or de-
 12 pendents may be eligible;

13 (2) Skills necessary to provide quality representation and advocacy on behalf of veterans
 14 or their spouses or dependents, including case preparation and handling of administrative
 15 hearings and appeals;

16 (3) Effective communication skills;

17 (4) Health care, human services and referral resources; and

18 (5) Case management services.

19 **SECTION 4.** (1) The Director of Veterans' Affairs shall adopt by rule a formula to dis-
 20 tribute to county governing bodies funds appropriated to the director to enhance and expand
 21 the services provided by county veterans' service officers appointed under ORS 408.410. In
 22 developing the distribution formula, the director shall consider factors that include, but need
 23 not be limited to:

24 (a) The number of veterans residing in each county;

25 (b) A base amount to be distributed equally among counties;

26 (c) Retention of an amount, not to exceed six percent of the total amount appropriated
 27 to the director for the purposes of section 2 of this 2005 Act, that would otherwise be dis-
 28 tributed to a county governing body if the county governing body has not appointed county
 29 veterans' service officers, including amounts that would otherwise be distributed to Marion
 30 and Polk Counties; and

31 (d) Criteria for withholding funds from a county governing body.

32 (2) Funds retained under subsection (1)(c) of this section must be spent on:

33 (a) Training costs of veterans' service officers and other individuals providing similar
 34 services; and

35 (b) The purchase, maintenance and coordination of computer systems and technology to
 36 facilitate efficient delivery of services to veterans and their spouses and dependents.

37 (3) Funds withheld under subsection (1)(d) of this section must be redistributed to other
 38 county governing bodies to expand and enhance the services provided by county veterans'
 39 service officers.

40 **SECTION 5.** The Director of Veterans' Affairs shall adopt rules to implement sections
 41 2, 3 and 4 of this 2005 Act. The rules shall include, but need not be limited to:

42 (1) Development and implementation of a distribution formula;

43 (2) Establishment of reporting and data collection requirements for county veterans'
 44 service officers including, but not limited to, the number of interviews conducted, the num-
 45 ber of veterans and spouses and dependents of veterans served by the program, the number

1 of claims filed, the outcomes of claims filed and the outreach activities conducted;

2 (3) Establishment of service outcomes for county veterans' service officers;

3 (4) Procedures for ensuring the confidentiality of records; and

4 (5) Development and implementation of a plan to incrementally staff the program de-
5 scribed in section 2 (1) of this 2005 Act with trained, accredited representatives.

6 **SECTION 6.** (1) A county governing body that receives funds under section 4 of this 2005
7 Act may not use the funds to supplant moneys appropriated by the county governing body
8 for county veterans' service officers.

9 (2)(a) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, if a county governing body reduces
10 appropriations to county programs, the county governing body may reduce the amount of
11 moneys appropriated for county veterans' service officers by an amount not greater than the
12 average percentage reduction imposed on all county programs for the same period of time.

13 (b) A county governing body that reduces the amount of moneys appropriated for county
14 veterans' services officers under paragraph (a) of this subsection shall certify to the Director
15 of Veterans' Affairs that the amount of the reduction is not greater than the average per-
16 centage reduction imposed on all county programs for the same period of time.

17 (3) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section, if the amount of moneys distributed
18 to a county governing body by the Director of Veterans' Affairs to enhance and expand the
19 services provided by county veterans' service officers appointed under ORS 408.410 for
20 biennia beginning after June 30, 2007, is less than the amount of moneys distributed to the
21 county governing body for the 2005-2007 biennium, the county governing body may reduce the
22 amount of moneys appropriated by the county governing body for county veterans' service
23 officers by an amount not greater than the same percentage of reduction.

24 **SECTION 7.** Moneys appropriated to the Director of Veterans' Affairs for the purposes
25 described in section 2 of this 2005 Act must be distributed to county governing bodies and
26 expended for the purposes of section 2 of this 2005 Act and may not be used to supplant
27 moneys currently budgeted by the director for services provided by county veterans' service
28 officers.

29 **SECTION 8.** The Director of Veterans' Affairs shall carry out the provisions of sections
30 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this 2005 Act in consultation with the Association of Oregon Counties.

31 **SECTION 9.** (1) The Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Program is created
32 in the Oregon Military Department. The purpose of the program is to provide hardship
33 grants and loans to members and immediate family of members of the Oregon National
34 Guard on active duty.

35 (2) The department shall adopt regulations implementing subsection (1) of this section,
36 including but not limited to establishing procedures for applying for a hardship grant or loan
37 and criteria for determining eligibility to receive a hardship grant or loan.

38 (3) As used in this section, "immediate family" means a spouse, child or stepchild.

39 **SECTION 10.** The Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund is established
40 in the State Treasury, separate and distinct from the General Fund. The Oregon Military
41 Emergency Financial Assistance Fund shall consist of moneys appropriated to the fund by
42 the Legislative Assembly and moneys contributed through the charitable checkoff program
43 described in section 11 of this 2005 Act. Moneys in the fund are continuously appropriated
44 to the Oregon Military Department for the purposes of funding hardship grants and loans
45 described in section 9 of this 2005 Act. Interest earned by the fund shall be credited to the

1 fund.

2 **SECTION 11.** (1) Personal income taxpayers who file an Oregon income tax return and
 3 who will receive a tax refund from the Department of Revenue may designate that a contri-
 4 bution of all or a portion of the refund be made to the Oregon Military Emergency Financial
 5 Assistance Program by marking the appropriate box printed on the return pursuant to sub-
 6 section (2) of this section.

7 (2)(a) Subject to paragraph (b) of this subsection, the Department of Revenue shall print
 8 on the face of the Oregon personal income tax return form a space for a taxpayer to desig-
 9 nate that a contribution be made to the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance
 10 Program from the taxpayer's income tax refund. The space for designating the contribution
 11 shall provide for checkoff boxes as indicated under ORS 305.749.

12 (b) If space limitations make listing the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance
 13 Program on the return form impracticable without the removal of a checkoff program listing
 14 described in ORS 316.490, 316.493 or 496.380, the Oregon Military Emergency Financial As-
 15 sistance Program may be given an instruction listing as described in ORS 305.727. ORS
 16 305.727 (3) does not apply to the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Program.

17 (3) Moneys contributed to the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Program
 18 through the checkoff program described in subsection (1) of this section shall be deposited
 19 in the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund.

20 **SECTION 12.** ORS 305.753 is amended to read:

21 305.753. (1) The State Treasurer may solicit and accept from private and public sources and
 22 cause to be credited and paid to any entity gifts, grants and other donations, in money or otherwise,
 23 if the entity is currently listed or entitled to be listed on the Oregon tax return for checkoff.

24 (2) In accordance with ORS chapter 183, the Department of Revenue may adopt rules to carry
 25 out the purposes of ORS 305.690 to 305.753.

26 (3) Except ORS 305.749, ORS 305.690 to 305.753 do not apply to the Nongame Wildlife Fund es-
 27 tablished under ORS 496.385, the Alzheimer's Disease Research Fund established under section 3,
 28 chapter 902, Oregon Laws 1987, the subaccount created pursuant to section 36 (2), chapter 1084,
 29 Oregon Laws 1999, or its successor, **the Oregon Military Emergency Financial Assistance Fund**
 30 **established under section 10 of this 2005 Act** or other checkoff program established by statute
 31 other than ORS 305.690 to 305.753.

32 **SECTION 13.** ORS 305.749 is amended to read:

33 305.749. Except ORS 305.690 to 305.753 and as otherwise specifically provided, the following are
 34 applicable to the various checkoff programs established under ORS 496.380 **and section 11 of this**
 35 **2005 Act** and ORS chapter 316:

36 (1) Subject to subsection (4) of this section, the dollar amounts of contributions made by tax-
 37 payer checkoff on Oregon tax returns shall be remitted by the Department of Revenue to the State
 38 Treasurer who shall deposit them to a suspense account established under ORS 293.445.

39 (2) Of the contributions so deposited, a portion is continuously appropriated for use to reimburse
 40 the General Fund for costs incurred in administering the various checkoff programs. No more than
 41 10 percent of the moneys generated by each checkoff program per fiscal year ending June 30 may
 42 be appropriated under this subsection.

43 (3) The remainder of the contributions shall be credited by the department to each checkoff
 44 program in proportion to the total amounts checked off for the tax year, the proportions to be de-
 45 termined on the basis of tax returns processed as of the June 30 following the tax year. The amounts

1 so credited to each of the checkoff programs are continuously appropriated to the department for
2 payment to the checkoff designee, or shall be transferred by the department to the checkoff
3 designee, as specified under the law governing the particular checkoff program. The department may
4 adopt rules governing the crediting and payment or transfer of checkoff moneys. In addition to any
5 other provision, if adopted, the rules shall specify the time that the contributions to a program so
6 credited are to be paid or transferred by the department.

7 (4)(a) Space for designating the dollar amount of a contribution made to each checkoff program
8 shall be printed on the Oregon tax return. The space shall provide for checkoff boxes for the pro-
9 gram in the amounts of \$1, \$5, \$10 or other dollar amount.

10 (b) Overpayments of tax that are insufficient, due to ORS 293.250 or otherwise, to satisfy the
11 total amount of checkoffs designated on a tax return shall be allocated among the designees on a
12 pro rata basis as provided under ORS 305.745 (3).

13 (5)(a) If, as of June 30 of the calendar year immediately following the calendar year in which a
14 particular tax year begins, the department determines that the total amount checked off for that tax
15 year for a checkoff program is \$50,000 or less, the department shall notify a person administering
16 the program or other appropriate person.

17 (b) If, as determined by the department under paragraph (a) of this subsection, the total amount
18 checked off for a particular checkoff program is \$50,000 or less for each year in a period of two
19 consecutive tax years, a checkoff line and appropriate box for that program shall not be provided
20 on the Oregon individual tax return for the tax year immediately following the later year of the
21 two-year period nor for any tax year thereafter, except as otherwise provided by law.

22 (c) As used in this subsection, "total amount checked off" means the total amount checked off
23 by taxpayers as reflected by tax returns for the tax year processed as of June 30 before any de-
24 duction for administrative costs as required under subsection (2) of this section has occurred but
25 after any proration under subsection (4) of this section.

26 **SECTION 14. Section 11 of this 2005 Act and the amendments to ORS 305.749 and 305.753**
27 **by sections 12 and 13 of this 2005 Act apply to biennial years, as defined in ORS 305.690, be-**
28 **ginning on or after the effective date of this 2005 Act.**

29 **SECTION 15. This 2005 Act takes effect on the 91st day after the date on which the**
30 **regular session of the Seventy-third Legislative Assembly adjourns sine die.**