

Summary of Veterans Legislation Passed 2002 Legislative Session

ESHB 2453 – Veterans' records

Summary:

Veterans' discharge papers filed with county auditors after June 30, 2002, are no longer public records. Discharge papers filed with county auditors prior to June 30, 2002, that are not commingled with other records are exempt from disclosure.

Discharge papers filed prior to June 30, 2002, that are commingled with other records are exempt from release to the public provided the veteran files a "request for exemption from public disclosure of discharge papers" with the county auditor.

County auditors may charge a basic recording fee and preservation fee, not to exceed \$7 in total, to veterans who file this request. The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Washington State Association of County Auditors will develop and distribute to county auditors the exemption form.

Veterans' discharge papers may be released to the veteran, the veteran's next of kin, a deceased veteran's properly appointed personal representative or executor, a person holding the veteran's general power of attorney, or anyone else designated in writing by the veteran to receive the records. County auditors will develop a form for requestors of military discharge papers to verify that the requestor is authorized to receive or view the military discharge papers.

[How to exempt a DD214 from Public Disclosure in Washington State](#)

SSB 5097 – POW/MIA flag

Summary:

Every state agency, every state institution of higher education and every county, city, and town must display the national league of families POW/MIA flag along with the state and national flags upon or near its principal building on specific days.

These days are

- Armed Forces Day on the third Saturday in May
- Memorial Day on the last Monday in May
- Flag Day on June 14
- Independence Day on July 4
- National POW/MIA Recognition Day third Friday in September
- Veterans' Day on November 11
- If the designated day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, then the POW/MIA flag will be displayed on the preceding Friday.

Where to purchase the POW/MIA flag:

Check the phone book or Internet directory under "Flags" to locate a supplier.

How to display the POW/MIA flag:

The POW/MIA flag may be flown directly under the United States Flag.



When flying the Washington State flag under the United States Flag, or on a separate pole, the POW/MIA flag may be flown below the State flag.



ESB 5626 – Definition of veteran

Summary:

For some purposes, the definition of veteran includes:

- Peacetime veterans and those who have fulfilled their initial military service obligation in any branch of the armed services and the National Guard and reserves;
- Those in the National Guard, reserves or Coast Guard who have been called into federal service by a presidential select reserve call up for at least 180 cumulative days; and
- Those who served in the Philippine Armed Forces or Scouts in World War II.

The purposes to which this definition applies are for:

- Veterans' preference on civil service exams;
- Free license plates for 100% disabled veterans;
- County aid to indigent veterans;
- Restrictions on sending veterans to alms houses;
- County burials; and
- Those service categories of the modified definition to current service members eligible to have continuing valid drivers' licenses.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board and Joint Committee on Pension Policy must study what would be the effect on their respective agencies of changing to the more inclusive definition of veteran.

SB 6375 – Retirement/veterans

Summary:

For members of Washington State Patrol Retirement System (WSPRS) and Public Employees Retirement System Plan 1 (PERS I) who receive full federal military retirement benefits, the prohibition on receiving state service credit based on that same period of military service is eliminated.

This revised requirement conforms to the federal code.

For public pension purposes, the Vietnam Era is redefined as either (1) the period beginning August 5, 1964, and ending May 7, 1975, for all veterans or (2) the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending May 7, 1975, for those veterans serving in the Republic of Vietnam during that period.

This revised definition conforms to the federal statute.

SB 6430 – WWII veterans

Summary:

Local school districts may issue high school diplomas to honorably discharged World War II veterans who left high school before graduation in order to serve in the War. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must specify the evidence requirements necessary to prove eligibility for the diploma.

SHB 2227 - Establishing the eastern Washington veterans' home.

Status: House Rules R

Background:

The Washington Department of Veterans' Affairs (WDVA) operates two state veterans' homes that provide long-term care for veterans and their spouses. The homes are the Soldiers' Home at Orting and the Veterans' Home at Retsil. Both homes are funded through a combination of funds that includes state general funds, per diem payments from the federal Department of Veterans' Affairs, Medicaid payments, and contributions from residents' incomes.

Summary:

An Eastern Washington veterans' home is established.

The Legislature intends that the state general fund shall not provide support in future biennia for the Eastern Washington home, except for amounts required to pay the state share of Medicaid costs.

The WDVA is authorized to operate and manage the Eastern Washington veterans' home in the same manner as other state veterans' homes are operated and managed.

Status of Master Plan Funding in the Budget

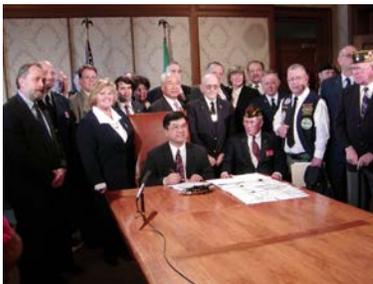
Capital Budget:

- Current House and Senate versions include funding for replacement construction at the Washington Veterans Homes.
- **Current House and Senate versions include language authorizing the purchase of a nursing home in eastern Washington.**

Operating Budget:

- Current House and Senate versions include start-up funding for the eastern Washington veterans' home. The House version requires the WDVA to reimburse the state for this start-up funding in the second year of the biennium.

Governor Locke took action on several veterans bills on April 2.



SB 5626, *the Definition of a Veteran*, and **SB 5097**, *the POW/MIA Flag Bill*, were both signed at the ceremony pictured here.

In addition, **HB 2453**, *the Veteran Identity Protection bill*, was signed on March 28, 2002