

## *Summary of Veterans Legislation 2005 Legislative Session*

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### **SHB 1019 - Property Tax Exemptions**

*Summary:* Veterans of the U.S. armed forces with 100 percent service connected disability are eligible for the same property tax relief as senior citizens based on their income.

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### **SHB 1065 - Armed forces license plate**

*Summary:* Directs the department to issue a special license plate collection, approved by the special license plate review board and the legislature, recognizing the contribution of veterans, active duty military personnel, and reservists. The collection includes six separate designs, each containing a symbol representing a different branch of the armed forces to include army, navy, air force, marine corps, coast guard and national guard.

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### **SHB 1174 - Veterans' tuition waivers**

*Summary:* Tuition waiver authority for all veterans is incorporated into one chapter and the various separate statutes are repealed. State-supported waiver authority is expanded to include the children and spouse, or surviving children and spouse, of certain veterans and National Guard members. Eligible veterans and National Guard members include Washington residents who are or were active duty or reserve military members or National Guard members called to active federal service in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters or in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters. Veterans and National Guard members who have been discharged from service must have received an honorable discharge in order to be eligible for a waiver. Permissive Waivers: Within state-supported waiver authority, institutions of higher education may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for: an eligible veteran or National Guard member; the children and spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member who is totally disabled in the line of duty, or who is listed as missing in action or a prisoner of war; and the surviving children and spouse of an eligible veteran or National Guard member killed in the line of duty. Upon remarriage, however, the surviving spouse no longer is eligible.

Institutions of higher education also may waive all or a portion of tuition and fees for a military or naval veteran who did not serve in active federal service abroad or in support of those serving abroad and who does not qualify as an eligible veteran or National Guard member. For these waivers, however, no State General Fund support is provided. Private vocational schools and institutions of higher education are encouraged to provide waivers consistent with those provided by the public institutions.

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### **SHB 1189 Veterans' relief**

*Summary:* Modifies or repeals veterans' relief provisions. Requires each county to establish veterans' assistance programs to address the needs of local indigent veterans and their families. Allows counties to authorize other entities to administer veterans' assistance programs if specified criteria are met. Requires each county to establish a veterans' advisory board to advise the county legislative authority on relief related matters.

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### **HB 1261 Veterans' & military affairs**

*Summary:* Makes the joint committee on veterans' and military affairs permanent.

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### **HB 1307 - Definition of veteran**

*Summary:* The definition of veteran is expanded to include a United States documented merchant mariner with service aboard an oceangoing vessel operated by the Department of Defense, or its agents, from both June 25, 1950, through July 27, 1953, in Korean territorial waters and from August 5, 1964 through May 7, 1975, in Vietnamese territorial waters, and received a military commendation.

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### **HB 1325 - Military service credit**

*Summary:* Revises provisions relating to interruptive military service credit within the public employees' retirement system, the school employees' retirement system, the teachers' retirement system, the law enforcement officers' and fire fighters' retirement system plan 2, the Washington state patrol retirement system, and the public safety employees' retirement system.

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### **HB 1405 - Disabled Hunting/Fishing Committee**

*Summary:* The termination date for the Fish and Wildlife Commission's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities is extended from July 1, 2005 until July 1, 2008.

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### **SHB 1509 - Widows of veterans**

**Summary:** A property tax exemption in the form of a grant is provided to certain widows and widowers of veterans based on the person's disposable household income. A program is created in the Department of Revenue to provide financial assistance for the payment of property taxes. The widow or widower must be eligible for the senior citizen property tax exemption program. In addition, the widow or widower must be at least age 62 when they apply for assistance and must be a widow or widower of a veteran that: died as a result of a service-connected disability; was rated as 100 percent disabled for the 10 years prior to death; was a prisoner of war and rated as 100 percent disabled for at least one year prior to death; died while on active duty; or died in active military training status. The retired widow or widower cannot remarry.

The assistance is equal to regular and excess property taxes imposed on the difference between the value eligible for exemption under the senior citizen program and: 1) \$50,000 if the income level is \$35,001 to \$40,000; 2) \$75,000 if the income level is \$30,001 to \$35,000; and 3) \$100,000 if the income level is \$30,000 or less.

Claims must be filed with the department no later than thirty days before the tax is due. The department may waive this requirement for good cause shown. Veterans are persons who were honorably discharged or discharged for physical reasons with an honorable record from the armed forces of the United States and served during periods of war or between World War I and World War II. Women's air force service pilots and certain merchant mariners are eligible. This change first applies to property tax due for collection in 2006.

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#### **SHB 1938 - PERS armed forces members**

**Summary:** The definition of "veteran" used for both interruptive and non-interruptive military service credit in PERS 1 is amended to include Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. A member of PERS 1 qualifies for non-interruptive military service credit while a member is actively serving honorably, in addition to after being honorably discharged, or being discharged for physical reasons with an honorable record. A member of PERS 1 qualifies for military service credit after completing 25 years of creditable service without returning to covered employment. A member who would have become eligible for a retirement benefit if they had continued working for a PERS 1 employer for a period that he or she is serving as a veteran may apply to the Department of Retirement Systems for military service credit.

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#### **SHB 2173 - Servicemember Civil Relief**

**Summary:** Establishes the Washington Service Members' Civil Relief Act to provide certain rights and protections in civil proceedings to service members and their dependents during their military service or within 180 days after the termination of their military service.

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#### **SSB 5112 - Veterans' benefits**

**Summary:** Adds service in southern or central Asia as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and service in the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom to the list of conflicts that qualify a member of the Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 for non-interruptive military service credit.

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#### **SB 5391 - Tricare sup insurance policy**

**Summary:** The Health Care Authority may make available a TRICARE supplemental insurance policy to employees who are eligible.

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#### **SB 5539 - Veterans conservation corps**

**Summary:** A veteran conservation corps is created and is administered by the salmon recovery funding board, in consultation from the Department of Veteran Affairs. The Veterans Conservation Corps Program Account is created. Grants from the account are for salmon recovery, watershed, and water clean up projects. Grant recipients must demonstrate that at least 75 percent of grant funds are for activities involving veterans coping with posttraumatic stress disorder. The program must be organized and marketed by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

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#### **SB 5563 - Women's contribution in WWII**

**Summary:** Includes women's contributions in the World War II oral history project.

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