
SENATE BILL 5608

State of Washington

62nd Legislature

2011 Regular Session

By Senators Kilmer, White, Kastama, Shin, Kohl-Welles, Kline, and Conway

Read first time 02/01/11. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to assistance for student veterans at institutions
2 of higher education; adding a new section to chapter 28B.35 RCW; and
3 making appropriations.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.35 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) Currently, more than two million veterans are eligible to
8 enroll full time in colleges across the country, however, many are not
9 fully accessing their veterans' educational benefits. Due to time
10 restrictions on these benefits, it is essential that colleges
11 coordinate services that allow veterans to enroll and complete their
12 degrees in a timely manner. A coalition has been formed in Washington
13 state to bring together community colleges and a public university in
14 regional capacity to meet the needs of student veterans and to benefit
15 veterans in ways including a more seamless transition from community
16 colleges to four-year institutions of higher education.

17 (2) Western Washington University shall coordinate a program that
18 leverages leadership of returning veterans. Olympic College, Everett

1 Community College, Skagit Valley College, Whatcom Community College,
2 Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, and Western
3 Washington University are the participating institutions.

4 (3) As a central resource, Western Washington University is
5 responsible for, but not limited to:

6 (a) Providing leadership opportunities for interested veterans that
7 draw upon veterans' military experiences;

8 (b) Identifying resources and pooling efforts among veterans to
9 address barriers to education such as child care and transportation,
10 and to create connections among student veterans;

11 (c) Reviewing and revising policies to improve the transfer
12 experience, with particular emphasis on reducing barriers unique to
13 student veterans, including difficulties encountered by student
14 veterans with mixed federal veterans' administration benefits and state
15 financial aid awards;

16 (d) Developing partnerships between the institutions and outside
17 agencies to bridge veteran support and services;

18 (e) Providing training for certifying officers on changes to
19 benefits processing and relevant laws;

20 (f) Providing training to faculty and staff on student veteran-
21 related issues; and

22 (g) Providing training for faculty, staff, and student peer
23 volunteers.

24 (4) Each participating institution under subsection (2) of this
25 section should endeavor to:

26 (a) Create a full-time dedicated veterans' coordinator or
27 certifying official;

28 (b) Create a dedicated veterans' office presence, both in-person
29 and online, to provide a place for veterans to meet, study, and connect
30 with other students who share in their transitional challenges
31 returning to civilian life and to access referral information;

32 (c) Collaborate with student representatives from organizations and
33 clubs to promote programs that will engage and support veterans and
34 help in the transition from military to civilian life;

35 (d) Provide direct assistance in areas such as academic advising,
36 career planning, tutorial services, financial literacy, and services
37 tailored to meet veteran's individual needs such as counseling and
38 disability services.

1 (5) Western Washington University shall allocate funds to the
2 participating institutions based on the number of veterans receiving
3 services at the institution.

4 (6) Western Washington University, with input from the
5 participating institutions, shall report by November 1st of even-
6 numbered years to appropriate committees of the legislature on outcomes
7 of the program in this section, including:

8 (a) The change in numbers of student veterans transferring from
9 two-year to four-year institutions;

10 (b) The change in numbers of student veterans graduating, and of
11 those graduating in a timely manner;

12 (c) Any increased opportunities for student veterans to be engaged
13 in leadership activities and their preparedness to use leadership
14 skills in a nonmilitary setting;

15 (d) Whether student veterans exhibit a stronger connectedness with
16 institutions and other veterans through mentoring, leadership
17 opportunities, and resource sharing;

18 (e) Any improved access to services and resources through
19 partnerships, collaborative efforts, and direct assistance;

20 (f) Enhanced knowledge for service providers, faculty, and staff on
21 each campus; and

22 (g) The improvements in basic infrastructure needs at individual
23 campuses.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The sum of eight hundred seventy-two
25 thousand seven hundred dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary,
26 is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, from the
27 general fund to Western Washington University for the purposes of this
28 act.

29 (2) The sum of one million ninety-seven thousand five hundred
30 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for
31 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, from the general fund to Western
32 Washington University for the purposes of this act.

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