



Legislation Text

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Clerk 04/10/2014

A MOTION requiring the executive to develop and submit for council review and approval a report on improving programs and services for incarcerated veterans in department of adult and juvenile detention jail facilities.

WHEREAS, King County is home to more than one hundred twenty-seven thousand current or former members of the United States military, reserves and National Guard who have served active duty. This population of veterans represents almost seven percent of the total county population, and

WHEREAS, the population of veterans in the state is growing and Washington State ranks twelfth nationwide for the total number of veterans, and King County is home to twenty-four percent of the state's population of veterans ranging from young adults to centenarians, male and female, and identify with a variety of races and backgrounds, all with equally varied needs, and

WHEREAS, the end of the United States military draft and conversion to an all-volunteer military in the 1970s substantially changed the demographic makeup of the military leading to the fact that there is a greater proportion of women and increased proportions of veterans of color than ever before in the history of the United States, and

WHEREAS, the local unemployment rate for veterans is estimated at over four percent for veterans in the job market, and

WHEREAS, approximately five percent of King County veterans live below poverty level and another over nine percent live between one hundred and two hundred percent of poverty level resulting in fourteen percent of all King County veterans fall below two hundred percent of poverty level. A disproportionate

number of veterans of color are poor, and

WHEREAS, data collected in the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System suggest that sixteen to eighteen percent of homeless single adults are veterans. A review of the records for calendar year 2012-2013 from Safe Harbors identified one thousand nine hundred ninety-two veterans served by county shelters and transitional housing, and

WHEREAS, research has shown rates of posttraumatic stress disorder of fifteen to thirty percent among veterans who have served in combat zones. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, fifteen percent of soldiers who served in Iraq had concussions or other traumatic brain injuries while on active duty. These soldiers were significantly more likely to have posttraumatic stress disorder three months after their return home than soldiers without brain injuries. The national research suggests that thousands of King County veterans have or are experiencing posttraumatic stress symptoms to some degree, and

WHEREAS, in 2011, King County's department of community and human services identified one thousand two hundred ninety-one veteran clients receiving mental health services and recent research has shown that about forty-eight percent of homeless veterans suffer from mental health issues, with slightly more than sixty-eight percent suffering from drug or alcohol or drug abuse problems and thirty-five percent having cooccurring psychiatric and substance use disorders, and

WHEREAS, research has shown that poverty, unemployment, chemical dependency, homelessness and mental illness, including brain injury, are contributing factors to criminality, and

WHEREAS, veterans coming into contact with the criminal justice system often have a number of unmet service needs across multiple domains, including mental health issues, substance abuse, homelessness and unemployment, and

WHEREAS, by introducing and incorporating veterans' justice programs, barriers to recovery can more effectively be addressed and resources can be put in place to help stabilize and support veterans and returns these individuals to their communities, and

WHEREAS, national statistics show that about fifteen percent of people who are incarcerated are veterans, however, in King County current data shows that veterans are estimated to comprise just two percent of the county jail population, the department of adult and juvenile detention however, acknowledges that the number of incarcerated veterans in King County is likely understated, and

WHEREAS, the county participates in the Incarcerated Veterans Reintegration Services, a joint endeavor between the King County department of community and human services and the Washington state Department of Veterans Affairs, where the needs of eligible veterans incarcerated in the King County Correctional Facility and other local jails are jointly addressed, offering veterans alternatives to jail, referrals to housing, employment and treatment services, and

WHEREAS, the King County veterans program serves low-income, homeless, disabled and at-risk veterans and their families and these veterans, current service members, National Guard members, Reserve members and certain dependents of veterans, and

WHEREAS, many veterans who become incarcerated also have a history of untreated drug and alcohol issues, poverty, homelessness or issues related to posttraumatic stress disorder, and

WHEREAS, the King County department of adult and juvenile detention operates one of the largest detention systems in the Pacific Northwest, with an adult system responsible for over thirty thousand bookings a year and housing an average of one thousand eight hundred twenty pre- and postadjudicated felons and misdemeanants every day, and

WHEREAS, the department of adult and juvenile detention currently provides a variety of services and programming to incarcerated inmates, including veterans, and

WHEREAS, the department of adult and juvenile detention exceeds the mandated minimum of four hours per day, five days per week of inmate programming a week, and

WHEREAS, the department of adult and juvenile detention offers thirty-six inmate programs and services at each of its adult detention facilities in the areas of: reentry transitional support; educational and

vocational classes; health and wellness; creative expression and recreation; drug and alcohol support and religious services and counseling, and

WHEREAS, the department of adult and juvenile detention does not have formally established programs serving incarcerated veterans, nor does it have dedicated facilities or staff for serving incarcerated veterans, and

WHEREAS, in February 2013, the executive established the regional veterans initiative as a countywide program in order to create stronger regional partnerships and coordination of services for veterans across local, state, federal and community organizations, and

WHEREAS, in 2012 the department of community and human services, mental health, chemical dependency and abuse services division established the veterans justice initiative and created the veterans justice coordinator position in 2013, and

WHEREAS, the executive's August 2013 report on the regional veterans initiative review of county veterans' programs stated that while a wide range of services are available to veterans, the system of veteran services is fragmented and that the county should work to improve coordination of services in order to increase veterans' access to services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The executive is requested to develop and submit to the council for review and acceptance, a report on veterans in the King County jail system. The report should summarize the recommendations, findings and options identified by the work group on veterans services in the jail. The report shall be transmitted to the council, accompanied by a motion to accept the report, by December 31, 2014. The report shall be transmitted in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy to the clerk of the council, who shall distribute electronic copies to all councilmembers and the lead staff for the committee of the whole and the law, justice, health and human services committee, or their successors.

B. The overarching goal of the incarcerated veterans report and recommendations is improving services

for incarcerated veterans. The report should include the following:

1. Recommendations and options for providing veteran specific services and programs to incarcerated veterans, including dedicated veterans housing options in jail facilities or other forms of veteran-only programming;
2. Recommendations and options for creating a veterans housing unit, or a predominantly veterans housing unit, at each county detention facility serving adults;
3. Recommendations and options for veterans to not lose existing veterans administration benefits;
4. Recommendations and options for facility arrangements to accommodate veterans' programs and services;
5. Recommendations and options for either new or restructured, or both, staffing models to provide veterans focused programming and on the utilization of department of adult and juvenile detention personnel who are veterans to provide supervision in incarcerated veteran housing;
6. Recommendations and options on methodologies for collecting veteran status of incarcerated veterans, whether collected at time of booking by correctional staff, through jail health services or through other means;
7. Recommendations and options for ongoing training opportunities for jail and jail health staff on working with veteran specific populations and understanding military culture and military trauma informed care;
8. Recommendations and options for addressing the identified gaps in services for veterans in King County jails;
9. Any other recommendations or options to improve and better coordinate services for incarcerated veterans; and
10. A work plan and implementation timeline detailing when the recommendations will be implemented.

C. The overarching goal of the incarcerated veterans report should reflect recommendations and options that lead to:

1. Reduction in recidivism by veterans;
2. Consistent and accurate data on the population of veterans in King County jail facilities;
3. Improvement in the coordination of services provided in King County jails for incarcerated

veterans; and

4. Advance successful veteran reentry into the community after incarceration.
5. Coordination and collaboration across county departments and agencies around veterans' issues.

D. The executive is requested establish a work group to include, but not be limited to, representatives of the following agencies and entities:

1. The executive's office;
2. The department of adult and juvenile detention;
3. The department of community and human services, regional veterans initiative project, community services division veterans program and the mental health, chemical dependency and abuse services division;
4. The prosecuting attorney's office;
5. The department of public defense;
6. The sheriff's office;
7. The veterans advisory board;
8. The veterans citizen levy oversight board;
9. The Washington state Department of Veterans Affairs;
10. The Washington state Department of Corrections;
11. The United States Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Justice Outreach

Coordinator; and

12. Council staff.

E. The work group is tasked with conducting data gathering and analysis that the recommendations and options in the report will be based on, including:

1. Reviewing the county's current methods for identifying veterans in detention, including jail health programs, examining veteran status collection methods of other jurisdictions and identifying best or promising practices to collecting veteran status in jails in order to determine if there are other methods for capturing data on criminal justice system-involved veterans other than through jail records;

2. Inventorying all county services available to incarcerated veterans in the county's jail facilities and how services are provided to veterans within jail facilities; and

3. Gathering and identifying best and promising practices in other jurisdictions as models for the provision of services to incarcerated veterans.