

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

February 15, 2005 Hearing Room C

8:30 A.M. Tapes 23 - 24

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Rep. Donna Nelson, Chair**

Rep. Phil Barnhart, Vice-Chair

Rep. Debi Farr, Vice-Chair

Rep. Brian Boquist

Rep. Scott Bruun

Rep. Dave Hunt

Rep. Betty Komp

STAFF PRESENT: **Jim Stembridge, Committee Administrator**

Erin Seiler, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

Public Testimony - Informational Meeting

Veterans' Issues - Informational Meeting

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/#	Speaker	Comments
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TAPE 23, A

001 Chair Nelson Opens the meeting at 8:36 a.m. Opens an informational meeting for public testimony.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY - INFORMATIONAL MEETING

029 Katie Harris County Veterans' Service Officer, Columbia County. Explains role of a Veterans' Service Officer. Discusses the responsibilities of a County Veterans' Service Officers (CVSO) and the nature of assistance that CVSO provide to veterans.

049 Chair Nelson Asks how much revenue Columbia County receives in Medicaid match dollars and why the county will not be receiving match dollars after July 2005.

054 Harris Explains that Medicaid guidelines have restricted the services that qualify as outreach.

063 Harris Explains how much is spent per veteran and the net fiscal benefit to Columbia County.

084 Cathy Joeckel Citizen, Columbia County. Praises the CVSO from Columbia County for all done on behalf of the Joeckel Family.

113 Chair Nelson Asks how the Columbia County Veterans' Office defines veteran.

115 Harris Explains how the definition varies depending upon a series of mitigating factors.

160 Harris Explains the qualifications for receiving Veterans' Administration (VA) pension benefits.

173 Katherine Chakos Citizen, Columbia County. Praises the CVSO from Columbia County for all done on behalf of the Chakos Family.

216 Brad Parker Disability Specialist, Columbia County. Expresses support for the work of Harris and the Columbia County Veterans' Service Office and states the need for more funding for the office.

266	Parker	Explains the work he does on behalf of veterans and how his position is funded.
300	Frank Eckrode	Veteran, Yamhill County. Testifies about the need to remove the Federal Concurrent Receipt Law.
335	Eckrode	States his appreciation for the formation of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.
345	Chair Nelson	Comments on the hard work of CVSO on behalf of all veterans.
375	Chair Nelson	Closes the informational meeting for public testimony. Opens an informational meeting on Veterans' Issues.

VETERANS' ISSUES - INFORMATIONAL MEETING

380	Cindy Becker	Deputy Director, Department of Human Services (DHS). Explains what the Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS), its function, and how DHS uses it to assist veterans.
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TAPE 24, A

049	Becker	Discusses the problems DHS is experiencing in accessing veterans' record recovered through PARIS. Identifying the primary problem as the inability to access records from the Department of Defense.
086	Chair Nelson	Ask if Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits or if food stamps are considered income.
090	Becker	Explains that TANF and food stamps are not considered income, but DHS does review whatever an income individual does receive and that the appliqué's income is offset against the amount of benefits received.
110	Becker	States that purpose of using PARIS is cost avoidance and that doing these matches will not result in "veterans getting thrown off of Medicaid...thrown out of long-term care"; rather DHS will apply income towards benefits.
129	Chair Nelson	Asks what DHS does if a PARIS match indicates that a veteran on Medicaid is entitled to VA benefits.

138	Becker	Explains the difference between DHS and CVSO.
180	James Tate	Assistant Director for Seniors and Disabilities, DHS. Explains why CVSO outreach will no longer be considered eligible for Medicaid matching funds.
208	Chair Nelson	Asks at what point VA benefits exceed the benefits received from Medicaid.
212	Tate	Explains Medicaid eligibility qualifications.
313	Rep. Hunt	Asks whether DHS has adequate statutory authority and staff resources to investigate and recover dollars.
340	Becker	Explains the DHS Program Integrity Fraud Protection Program and that DHS does have sufficient legal authority to investigate, recover dollars, and continue cost avoidance activities.
359	Becker	Addresses the fact that DHS is not trying to “do anyone harm, but want to be sure that we are operating with the best information about assets that someone might have.”
377	Chair Nelson	Expresses concern that the work of DHS is being done in the best interest of the veteran and their family.
390	Chair Nelson	Asks who has the authority to move a veteran from a nursing home, if it is determined that the veteran qualifies for VA and Medicaid benefits.

TAPE 23, B

001	Becker	Clarifies that DHS does not remove people because of amount of benefits they receive, a veterans’ benefits are applied to the cost of care where they are living.
010	Tate	Acknowledges how there are circumstances when a veteran has received VA benefits above the Medicaid cap and the Medicaid benefits are discontinued, but an individual is not moved from a nursing home, a veteran would purchase care services as part of a private pay arrangement.

020	Becker	States that Medicaid does not differentiate for veterans and that DHS has to follow the Medicaid statutes and if a veteran has assets, those assets have to be applied.
033	Chair Nelson	Verifies the income standard DHS uses to determine Medicaid eligibility.
036	Rep. Farr	Explains why it is important to understand how VA benefits are applied to assisted living, nursing care, and foster homes.
051	Tate	Agrees that it is “conceivable” to have a person with VA benefits above the Medicaid cap and “whatever setting their in the private pay would not match to be in that setting.”
056	Tate	Cites efforts of DHS to get veterans living at Oregon Veterans’ Home in The Dalles both Medicaid and VA benefits.
060	Becker	Clarifies that “it is not an either or situation” because there are many veterans who are eligible for Medicaid and do get some VA benefits.
070	Chair Nelson	Speaks to concern about having benefits for returning Iraqi soldiers, in particular mental health benefits.
082	Becker	Explains that DHS does have mental health services for those who are eligible.
126	Chair Nelson	Asks if there are any exceptions for getting benefits for veterans in “the time of wardon’t we have any exceptions anywhere.”
130	Becker	Points out that DHS has to follow Medicaid guidelines and that becoming too expansive jeopardizes the billion dollars in funding that DHS receives to each year.
145	Rep. Barnhart	Verifies that any integration between VA benefits and other types of benefits is accidental.
151	Becker	Restates that veterans are not treated differently then anybody else.
155	Rep. Barnhart	Verifies that the “holes” in benefits is a result of federal policy decisions and it is the responsibility of the federal government to fill in the “holes.”

173	Chair Nelson	Asks if DHS has any money to assist CVSO.
178	Becker	Identifies what impact the Governor's proposed budget cuts would have on the services provided by DHS.
185	Rep. Boquist	Asks what the criteria is for physical-need based Medicaid benefits and at what level on the impairment continuum do Medicaid cease.
214	Tate	Speaks to the efforts of Oregon to transcend many of the federal constraints in the Medicaid program.
231	Rep. Barnhart	Addresses the long-term needs of deployed soldiers and asks if DHS has sufficient resources to identify those soldiers who are in need of services.
264	Becker	Explains the long-term ability of DHS to adapt and provide services to a growing number of Oregon's population.
309	Rep. Barnhart	Discusses why the state has an interest in identifying veterans eligible for VA benefits.
325	Rep. Farr	Asks if there is an accurate account of the number of veterans receiving benefits from DHS.
334	Tate	States that DHS only has data on the number of veterans that are in long-term care.
355	Chair Nelson	Asks how many veterans utilize Oregon Project Independence.
373	Jacqueline Zimmer	Director, Oregon Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Disabilities. States that that information will be provided at a later date.
380	Chair Nelson	Asks how the cost of at-home assisted living care compares to nursing home care.
390	Zimmer	Speaks to the level of service provided by Oregon Project Independence, the cuts to their budget, and associated administrative costs.

TAPE 24, B

- 029 Chair Nelson Asks if having a family member provide at-home care is more economical than a nursing home placement.
- 034 Tate Explains that DHS does use Medicaid funds to compensate an individual, other than a spouse, to care for a person.
- 049 Zimmer Discusses the limitations on the Spousal-Pay Care Program and the elimination of the Relative Foster Care Program from the Governors' budget.
- 070 Rep. Farr Verifies the cost of paying a relative to provide at-home care versus the cost of a nursing care facility.
- 104 Becker Explains that all services that are alternatives to nursing home care are part of a Home and Community Based Federal Waiver.
- 113 Zimmer Points out that budget cuts have led to the elimination of long-term cares services to a number of tiers on the DHS level of impairment continuum.
- 131 Chair Nelson Asks how much funding DHS has lost in Medicaid dollars.
- 142 Becker Explains how much money DHS receives in matching dollars and the subsequent loss in dollars in the next biennium.
- 177 Rep. Boquist Addresses the important role and function of CVSO.
- 220 Tate Confirms that DHS reviews all assets and resources of an individual when verifying Medicaid eligibility.
- 229 Jim Stembridge Committee Administer. Submits Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) information packet that includes Metlife Market Survey of Nursing Home and Home Care Costs, Oregon Veterans' Home Resident Private Pay Rates and Profile of Payer Sources, Oregon Veterans' Home Primary Revenue Sources pie chart, Oregon Veterans' Home Resident Mix pie chart, and 2005-2007 ODVA Requested Policy Package (**EXHIBIT A**).
- 267 Chair Nelson

Close the informational meeting on Veterans' Issues. Adjourns the meeting at 10:17 a.m.

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EXHIBIT SUMMARY

A. Veterans' Issues, information packet, staff, 27 pp