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## **Snohomish County Veteran Helps Other Recently Discharged Service Members**

*County applauds newly-signed law facilitating veteran employment*

**EVERETT, Snohomish County, April 21, 2017** --Today, Snohomish County applauded Governor Inslee and Washington State Legislators for passing Substitute House Bill 1369, providing better employment opportunities for our veterans. Prior to the law being enacted, veterans might have to wait months after leaving military service until some of their benefits were available. The new law allows veterans to take their veterans preference benefit immediately upon receiving their honorable discharge documents.

“After serving us in the military, veterans deserve to access their benefits as soon as possible,” said Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive. “Snohomish County’s own Joshua Dugan, a Navy veteran, identified this problem and was the key in making this change for veterans and employers across Washington State. We are proud of his efforts to help our veterans make a speedy transition from military to civilian life. Snohomish County values the veterans who work as colleagues and those that call Snohomish County home. Their commitment to service and community is unparalleled.”

In 2016, Executive Somers launched an Economic Development Initiative that targets the military as a sector for special attention. The newly signed law grew out of efforts to assist veterans in Snohomish County and improve our recruiting for those wishing to serve in county government.

Washington State is home to approximately 588,430 veterans, 55,934 of whom call Snohomish County home. As service members transition to civilian employment, they face many obstacles but bring with them a series of invaluable skillsets into the local workforce. Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers worked with the Snohomish County Council to support this proposed legislation. In addition, WA State Representative Dave Hayes (10<sup>th</sup> District) and WA State Senator Steve Hobbs (44<sup>th</sup> District) were primary sponsors of the legislation and have been instrumental partners on this effort.

Prior to enactment of Substitute House Bill 1369, veterans in the act of transitioning from uniformed service to civilian employment were not eligible to claim veteran preference points. While preserving the nature and intent of distinguishing honorable service from other characterizations of service, this new legislation inserts a time period into the law that takes into account the functional end of service from the formal end of service. Transitioning service members may now rightfully claim veteran preference points upon receipt of their discharge documents at the beginning of their terminal or separation leave. This new law provides additional opportunity for veterans to seamlessly transition into civil service employment with fire departments, police departments, state agencies, county governments, and municipalities.

“I’m humbled and proud to be a part of a community that is so supportive of our nation’s veterans,” said Joshua Dugan, USN (retired) and former Command Master Chief of Naval Station Everett. “This new law paves the way for veterans to transition more quickly and more easily into their next career steps. I believe this is rightful recognition of their years of service and personal sacrifice. While I was on active duty, many of my Sailors wanted to continue to serve their community as police officers, firefighters, or state employees. The previous veteran definition was an obstacle to immediate reemployment. I’m immensely pleased to see this change occur with the unanimous support of our elected officials both locally and within the state legislature.”

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