

Submitter: Harold Tiernan
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3627
HB 3627, The Disabled Veterans Assistance Fund

This bill grew out of a national effort called “Ramps for [disabled] Vets”. Proposed assistance funding in the bill is \$2,000,000 in the first year, starting 1 July 2025.

HB 3627 has been expanded in scope to provide disabled veteran homeowners with resources beyond merely adding entryway ramps and handrails to their homes for improved accessibility, but also the flexibility to make other equally important enhancements, such as:

- Lower kitchen and bathroom counter-tops
- Flexible downward shelving installed within kitchen cupboards
- Walk-in and roll-in curbless showers/bathrooms
- Installing raised-height toilets
- Widening doorways and hallways
- Installing electric door openers
- Installing electric stair-lifts
- Installing roll-under and/or recessed kitchen and bathroom sinks
- Installing roll-in/movable closets

Costs for these various projects range from \$1,500 to \$3,500 for ramps/handrails to \$500 to \$5,000 for widening doors/hallways, to \$700 for installing raised-height toilets. A two (2) million dollar budget to acquire such help, with proper management and assistance from 36 county Veteran Service Officers (VSOs), and ODVA would be an immense benefit.

The Marion County VSO, James Riddle, advises that his office receives, on average, twenty (20) accessibility requests per year, mainly for ramps. Other, fewer requests are for widening doors and bathroom modifications. VSOs across our other 35 Oregon counties, depending on size, e.g. Multnomah County, no doubt would have proportional numbers and kinds of accessibility requests. It is exactly for these latter kinds of lower cost, but vital, home modifications that HB 3627 is intended.

Some modifications may seem somewhat trivial to the uninformed advocate for disabled veterans, but they are hardly that. On the TV commercial for the huge Tunnel to Towers Foundation, which pays off home mortgages for distressed Veterans' families, one of the veterans is seen joyfully exclaiming, as he wheels into

his roll-in shower, "This is my favorite place in the house"!

And THIS is precisely the kind of specific, affordable help that HB 3627, The Disabled Veterans Assistance Fund, is designed to provide: the smaller, but equally valuable and treasured help that disabled vets are unable to get via large-scale federal VA adaptive housing grants and VA medical adaptive housing assistance.

Summary prepared by:

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Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Salem, Oregon, 7 March 2025.