

Vote YES on Measure 96

Veterans Lottery Bill commit 1.5% of undedicated lottery funds to veterans programs and services.

BY JULIE PARRISH, OREGON STATE REPRESENTATIVE

This November, Oregonians will be asked to consider several ballot measures. The more contentious measures will expend millions of dollars trying to win your vote.

However, the most impactful measure you can vote for is Measure 96, the Oregon Veterans Lottery Bill. It's a referral from the Legislature. We're asking you to commit 1.5% of undedicated lottery funds permanently to veterans programs and services.

In 2010, my husband Mark returned from Iraq with the Oregon National Guard. It was the largest foreign deployment of Oregon troops since World War II. Nearly fifty-percent of those deployed came home to no jobs. Six years later, many suffer chronic unemployment.

I've personally witnessed the toll the deployment took on families, including my own. Lack of reintegration services, employment opportunities, and family support were reasons I ran for the Legislature.

Since 2011, I've had the honor of serving on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. We've prioritized badly-needed services to support nearly 350,000 Oregon veterans, their service spanning five foreign wars and peacetime. Many of our solutions failed for lack of funding. When we were struggling to figure out how to keep a 24-hour suicide prevention line turned on, I knew it was time to do something different. It took me four years, but that something different is Measure 96.

Why should Oregonians vote "YES" on a permanent lottery dedication?

The wait-time to fully connect veterans to their earned federal Veterans' Administration benefits can take years. It's that gap where veterans fall into homelessness, miss critical healthcare and mental health visits, and even commit suicide. Veteran suicides account for nearly one-quarter of all Oregon's suicide deaths.

Oregon veterans are owed nearly \$4 billion annually in earned benefits like healthcare, disability compensation, and education. Hiring additional Veterans Services Officers will improve our ability to help veterans navigate the bureaucracy. Those



Governor Kulongoski and the Parrish family at the "Welcome Home" ceremony for Oregon National Guard soldiers returning from Iraq in 2010.

earned benefits meet real needs of veterans, and they will be spent in our local communities.

Some veterans receive state benefits from the Department of Human Services. Properly aligning veterans with the VA will save General Fund social service dollars.

Every veteran we connect to the Veterans Administration increases our federal funding for veterans' homes, transportation grants, and emergency housing dollars.

Most importantly, this won't impact permanent lottery dedications to education, parks, or fish.

As the wife of a combat veteran, I understand the challenges facing our Veterans' community. And as a legislator, I know our bi-partisan Veterans' Committees will ensure the money you vote for will be well-spent, getting to frontline services where it's needed most.

Please join me in keeping our promise to Oregon veterans. Vote YES on Measure 96!



State Representative Julie Parrish is the Chief Co-Sponsor of Measure 96 and the Chief Petitioner of Keeping Our Promise, the Oregon Veterans Lottery Bill.