

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1703

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2020

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1703.

This bill exempts disabled veterans from fees to obtain a beach buggy permit.

Multiple municipal beaches and State parks permit the operation of certain motorized vehicles on beach property, provided that the owner of the vehicle first obtains a permit. If a disabled veteran applies for such a permit and, if all qualifications are met, this bill would permit the veteran to receive the permit at no cost. The disabled veteran would also be able to replace or renew the permit free of charge.

State parks and municipal beaches set their own criteria as to what types of vehicles qualify as a beach buggy; implement restrictions on dates, times, and locations to operate a beach buggy; and limit the extent to which a beach buggy may be used (for instance, only for fishing purposes). A disabled veteran who obtains a free permit under this bill would still be required to abide by all applicable State and local regulations. Likewise, nothing in this bill would permit a disabled veteran who obtains a free permit to use the beach buggy in violation of State and local law—for instance, operating a beach buggy in a municipality that does not permit their operation or failing to obtain a proper driver's license or inspection certificate.

A disabled veteran is defined in the bill as a State resident who has been honorably discharged from any branch of the United States Armed Forces and has been declared by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as having a service-connected disability of any degree.

As reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 1703 is identical to Assembly Bill No. 715, which also was reported by the committee on this date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) estimates that the bill would result in an indeterminate marginal decrease in revenue for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and certain municipalities associated with reduced fee collection, as the bill prohibits public entities from imposing permit fees on qualifying disabled veterans for the operation of motorized vehicles on public beaches (beach buggies). Based on information from the United States

Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately 57,000 disabled veterans in New Jersey would be eligible to obtain or renew a beach buggy permit free of charge. However, the OLS is unable to quantify the impact of this bill because it is unknown how many of these disabled veterans will obtain or renew a beach buggy permit or the price that would have been paid for the permit.