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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Josh Newman, Chair  
2023 - 2024 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 322	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	June 28, 2023
<b>Author:</b>	Mathis		
<b>Version:</b>	March 23, 2023		
<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
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**Subject:** Veteran and California National Guard Supplemental Orientation Act of 2023.

**NOTE:** This bill has been referred to the Committees on Education and *Military and Veterans Affairs*. A "do pass" motion should include referral to the Committee on *Military and Veterans Affairs*.

### SUMMARY

This bill requires that each California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC) campus and requests that each University of California (UC) include in transfer and first-year student orientation specified information for students who are veterans and their dependents.

### BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes the CSU and the CCC, and encourages the UC to coordinate services for qualified students who are veterans or members of the military by clearly designating Military and Veterans Offices and individuals to provide specified services to qualified students. Current law defines "qualified student" as a student who is any of the following: an active-duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the California National Guard, a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States, and/or a family member of a person (as described above) who is a legal dependent under 28 years of age or living in the household of that person and eligible to be claimed as a dependent on federal or state tax returns. (Education Code (EC) § 69785)
- 2) Requires CSU, and requests UC, to provide educational and preventive information about cyberbullying to students at all campuses of their respective segments as a part of established campus orientations. (EC § 66302.5)
- 3) Requires the governing board of each CCC district and the CSU, and requests UC, to provide, as part of established campus orientations, educational and preventive information about sexual violence to students at all campuses of their respective segments. It additionally requires that this information and the specified sexual harassment information be provided during the regular orientation for incoming students. (EC § 67385.7)
- 4) Declares that:

- a) Comprehensive information about acquaintance rape and other kinds of sexual assaults should be provided at all new student orientation programs and at any campus program that students are required to attend.
  - b) Colleges should provide special sexual assault seminars for all athletic coaches and administrators and members of athletic teams. These seminars should take place during a student athlete orientation program or prior to the first team meeting. Seminars should use the campus media, newspapers, radio, and television to heighten awareness of campus violence and its prevention. (EC § 67390)
- 5) Establishes that it is the intent of the Legislature that credit card and debt education and counseling sessions become a regular part of campus orientation of new students. (EC § 99030)

## ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the Veteran and California National Guard Supplemental Orientation Act 2023 and requires, by the 2025-26 academic year, each campus of the CSU and the CCC and requests each UC campus to include within first-year student and transfer student orientations the location and contact information of the campus point of contact for students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and members of the California State Guard and the California National Guard, and their dependents.
- 2) By the 2025-26 academic year, requires each CSU and CCC campus and requests each UC campus point of contact develop a document that includes, at a minimum, information on policies, resources, and services, including but not limited to counseling, for students who are military veterans and their dependents.
- 3) By the 2025-26 academic year, requires that each CSU and CCC campus and request that each UC campus point of contact make the specified document available in hard copy form at the location of the campus point of contact and post the document, along with other information available to students and their dependents, on the campus's internet website.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) **Need for the bill:** According to the author, "There is currently no obligation for universities or colleges to include any information for incoming students regarding veteran's benefits or campus veteran-specific activities.

Over the past decade, the State Legislature has required that universities and colleges within California include certain information during student orientation to ensure the safety, health, wellbeing and academic success of the incoming

students, including information on sexual violence, cyberbullying, and CalFresh – amongst others. Similarly, the Student Equity and Achievement Program established the statewide goal to boost achievement for all students and ensure equal educational opportunities and to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances.

However, although many universities and colleges currently offer useful and potentially lifesaving veteran services, including staff, facilities and materials that assist with housing resources, disability accommodation, financial aid, peer mentoring, access to counselors and tutoring; many veterans and National Guard members are either unaware of these facilities, are not provided with practical information on how to access the available resources, or are not encouraged to use the services within student orientation. This critical oversight means that veterans and National Guard members are often required to seek out the services or ask for help themselves, which unfortunately commonly results in many veterans and National Guard members not receiving the assistance or resources available to them and struggling unnecessarily.”

The author further asserts, “AB 322 will ensure that each veteran and member of the National Guard is provided with information on the available resources and services, such as counselling, that the educational institution has to offer and receive the support, information and tools necessary to succeed.”

- 2) **Existing efforts to support student veterans.** There is acknowledgement among colleges of the re-entry challenges many student veterans face and the need to expand support services to help veterans successfully integrate into college life. Every CSU campus has a center focused on meeting the needs of students who have served or are serving in the military and their families through Veterans Resource Centers. Currently, mandatory fee waivers are available to dependents or survivors of disabled or deceased California veterans. At the CCCs, 114 of California’s 116 community colleges have a veteran’s resource center. These centers not only provide academic programs and career training for returning veterans but also provide assistance with transitioning to life after military service. Many centers have counselors versed in GI Bill requirements and track how veterans are progressing toward reaching benchmarks in their educational plans. This bill seeks to ensure that veterans and their dependents are aware of programming and services to meet the specific needs of this emerging student population.
- 3) **Orientation.** This bill expands the number of state-mandated disclosures that universities must provide to incoming students as part of their orientation process (outlined in the background of this analysis). The Committee may wish to consider at what point information becomes overprescribed.

## SUPPORT

American Legion, Department of California  
Amvets, Department of California  
California State Commanders Veterans Council  
California Teachers Association

Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters  
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council

**OPPOSITION**

None received

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