



veterans have access to safe, effective, and innovative care options beyond narcotic medications.

This bill is supported by the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers and the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. There is no registered opposition.

- 2) **Background.** PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, such as war, abuse, accidents, or natural disasters. PTSD is associated with serious long-term health risks, including depression, substance use disorders, and increased suicide risk. Veterans experience disproportionately high rates of PTSD, with research showing lifetime PTSD prevalence rates of approximately 8% among U.S. veterans and significantly higher rates among combat-exposed service eras. A 2020 Wounded Warrior Project survey found that 80% of women veterans experience PTSD, often due to unaddressed sexual violence in the military.

According to the author, while psychotherapy and medication remain standard treatments, a significant portion of veterans experience treatment-resistant PTSD or face barriers to accessing specialized care. Emerging studies suggest that alternative nonnarcotic therapies, such as HBOT (a medical treatment where patients breathe 100% oxygen inside a pressurized chamber), might offer hope for those resistant to conventional treatments. For example, a clinical trial conducted in 2024, revealed that 68% of veterans with combat-related PTSD experienced substantial improvement after undergoing HBOT. However, research remains limited.

This bill directs CalVet to fund a study on nonnarcotic PTSD treatments, including HBOT, and to make recommendations to the Legislature.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 2489 (Lowenthal), of this legislative session, establishes the California Veterans' Right to Try Act and authorizes the Research Advisory Panel to submit an investigational new drug (IND) application to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requesting approval for a clinical trial of Schedule I or Schedule II controlled substances among a patient pool comprised exclusively of veterans. AB 2489 is pending in this committee.

AB 81 (Ta), of this legislative session, would have required CalVet to fund an academic study of mental health among women veterans in California and to submit a report to the Legislature by July 31, 2029. AB 81 was vetoed by the Governor who was concerned the bill "would lead to significant fiscal costs outside of the budget."

**Analysis Prepared by:** Jennifer Swenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081