

Date of Hearing: March 24, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Pilar Schiavo, Chair

AB 1638 (Ta) – As Introduced January 26, 2026

SUBJECT: County veterans service officers: additional resources.

SUMMARY: Provides any county with an active United States (U.S.) military base with a stipend, upon appropriation, for the purposes of maintaining a county veterans service officer (CVSO), at least part time. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Requires that upon appropriation by the Legislature, a county that hosts an active U.S. military base is to receive a stipend to support the maintenance of a CVSO, at least part time.
- 2) Provides that the location of a CVSO on a U.S. military base is subject to approval by the base's command.
- 3) Prohibits a county from receiving the stipend if the county chooses not to maintain a CVSO on a military base or if the base does not approve of a CVSO being maintained at the base.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Permits the board of supervisors of each county to appoint a "county veterans service officer," who must be a veteran, and whose duty it is to assist veterans in obtaining veterans benefits and to perform any other veteran-related service requested by the board. (Military and Veterans Code (MVC) § 970.)
- 2) Permits two or more counties to jointly establish a single county veterans service office to serve all the counties that agree to the joint establishment of that office. (MVC § 971.)
- 3) Requires the compensation and expenses of the CVSO to be a county charge, but the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), out of state moneys available, is required to pay each county a portion of those costs in an amount determined by CalVet. (MVC § 972)
- 4) Provides for an annual state appropriation for the CVSOs, as determined in each year's Budget Act, currently funded at \$11 million. (MVC § 972.1)
- 5) Requires CalVet to determine and report to the Department of Finance (DOF) on or before October 1 of each year the annualized monetary value of benefits received by veterans and their dependents as a result of the efforts of CVSOs. (MVC § 972.1)
- 6) Directs DOF to review CalVet's determination in time to use the information in the annual Budget Act with regard to CalVet's budget for the next fiscal year. (MVC § 972.1)
- 7) Requires the state subvention funds to be disbursed each fiscal year on a pro rata basis to counties that have established and maintain a CVSO in accordance with the staffing level and workload of each CVSO under a formula based upon performance developed by CalVet, as specified. (MVC § 972.1)

- 8) Requires CalVet to annually prepare a report of the activities of CVSOs, and permits CalVet to require each CVSO to submit information required to prepare the report, and requires that the report to include all the following:
- a) The number of veterans and their family members who have contacted or utilized the services of the county veterans service offices during the fiscal year.
 - b) The number of claims filed to achieve benefits such as pension, disability compensation, and health care on behalf of veterans and their dependents.
 - c) The annualized monetary value of benefits received by veterans and their dependents as a result of the efforts of county veterans service offices, broken down by type of benefit.
 - d) A summary of other services provided by county veterans service offices and special events and activities in which county veterans service offices participated, such as veterans outreach events, homeless veteran “Stand Downs,” and job fairs for veterans. (MVC § 974.)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **PURPOSE OF THIS BILL.** According to the author, this bill would provide a stipend to counties that maintain a CVSO on each active U.S. military base in their county. Thereby establishing a connection between veterans and available services immediately upon their discharge is critical. This bill not only facilitates immediate access to benefits but also fosters an ongoing dialogue among veterans, the CVSO, and CalVet. Additionally, this bill would assist in bringing federal benefits to California, alleviate pressure on the state’s healthcare system, and reaffirm the state's commitment to the tens of thousands of service members discharged from active duty annually in California.
- 2) **BACKGROUND.** The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) reports that claims filed through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with the assistance of a CVSO have a higher rate of approval, demonstrating the value of CVSOs in guiding veterans through a complicated bureaucracy and connecting them to the benefits they deserve. However, many veterans are unaware of the role CVSOs play and the resources they provide. This is an issue in California, with the CACVSO reporting that the state’s ratio of veterans to Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) lags behind other states, resulting in “a limited supply of VSRs available to service the largest veteran population of any state in the nation.” The author estimates that limited access to VSRs results in an estimated 65,000 veterans missing out on their benefits and roughly \$1.1 billion in VA benefits lost annually.

California has taken steps to increase access to CVSOs, including last year raising ongoing annual funding of the County Veterans Service Officer Subvention Program to its statutory maximum of \$11 million. Individual CVSOs engage in various outreach efforts in an attempt to reach more veterans, including visits to college campuses and correctional institutions, and the operation of mobile office hours. The Solano County CVSO placed a veterans’ service representative at Travis Air Force Base.

The author claims that since then the Solano veterans' service officer has served an average of 10 discharging service members per day with nearly \$95 million in VA benefits being awarded, and that Solano County's approach connects veterans to CVSOs by providing discharging service members with a highly visible veterans service officer. The VA Fairfield Outpatient Clinic that provides health care to California veterans is also located on base. California has a significant number of VA health services integrated into or closely associated with its major military bases, with at least 10 to 15 major bases and several smaller stations providing dedicated VA health services. Therefore, not only will having a CVSO on additional military bases ease the transition for separating service members, but it would also be easily accessible to veterans already visiting VA health facilities.

- 3) **SUPPORT.** The City of Los Alamitos expresses its strong support for this bill to enhance county resources aimed at assisting our newly transitioning veterans in accessing their federal and California benefits. This bill will bridge the gap and guarantee that the service members who leave active duty each year in California can connect with an on-base CVSO and receive the benefits they have earned. Expanding access to CVSOs will effectively link veterans with their much-deserved benefits, helping to alleviate the financial pressures of living in California and enable veterans and their families to stay in the state. This bill not only aims to bring federal benefits to California but also reaffirms the state's commitment to supporting our service members and facilitating their transition to civilian life.
- 4) **RELATED LEGISLATION.** AB 2219 (Schiavo) enhances collaboration between CalVet and CVSOs to ensure California's veterans and their families receive the comprehensive support they truly deserve.
- 5) **PREVIOUS LEGISLATION.**
 - a) AB 684 (Ta) of 2023 was substantially similar to this bill and was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee Suspense File.
 - b) AB 1566 (Soria and Cervantes), Chapter 694, Statutes of 2023, requires CalVet's annual report to include the composition of staff at the county office, as specified, and the annual funding of the county veterans service office by the county, as specified. Authorizes CalVet to require CVSOs to apply uniform measurement of workload units, claims, and other information.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
City of Los Alamitos

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Patty Patten / M. & V.A. / (916) 319-3550