

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Pilar Schiavo, Chair

AB 1765 (Alanis) – As Amended March 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Vehicles: fee waivers for disabled veterans.

SUMMARY: Increases the weight limit of a commercial motor vehicle from less than 8,001 pounds unladen weight to less than 10,000 pounds unladen weight that the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) can waive the registration fees for a qualified disabled veteran, former American prisoner of war, surviving spouse of a former American prisoner of war, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, and surviving spouse of a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Exempts the following persons from DMV vehicle registration fees:
 - a) Disabled veteran;
 - b) Former prisoner of war;
 - c) Congressional Medal of Honor recipient; and,
 - d) The surviving spouse of a former American prisoner of war, or a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, who has elected to retain the special license plates issued under Section 5101.6 of the Vehicle Code. (Vehicle Code (VEH) § 9105)
- 2) Limits the registration fee exemption for the above parties to no more than one vehicle per American prisoner of war, disabled veteran, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, or a surviving spouse. (VEH§ 9105)
- 3) Excludes fees for duplicate plates, certificates, or cards, and excludes transportation for hire compensation, or profit. (VEH§ 9105)
- 4) Exempts Purple Heart recipients from DMV vehicle registration fees beginning January 1, 2027. (VEH§ 9105)
- 5) Defines a vehicle for purposes of the registration fee exemption as any of the following:
 - a) A passenger motor vehicle;
 - b) A motorcycle; or,
 - c) A commercial motor vehicle of less than 8,001 pounds unladen weight. (VEH § 9105)

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

COMMENTS:

- 1) **PURPOSE OF THIS BILL.** According to the author, removing the 8,000-pound unladen weight limitation for commercial vehicles will expand access to the fee exemption for many disabled veterans, particularly those who rely on recreational camping and outdoor activities to help mitigate the effects of service-connected conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder (PTSD). This bill aims to ensure that California fully honors its commitment to the heroes who have sacrificed so much to keep our nation safe.

- 2) **BACKGROUND.** According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a considerable number of veterans facing mental health challenges do not receive the necessary treatment. It is estimated that only 23–40% of veterans with health issues have sought help, and alarmingly, over 45% of U.S. military veterans diagnosed with PTSD who were referred for treatment did not undergo any therapy. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that veterans often wait a significant amount of time—up to 12 years after leaving service—before they seek assistance for their mental health struggles. NIH reports that spending time in nature is increasingly recognized for its positive effects on mental health. Recent studies indicate that engaging in outdoor activities, along with having social interactions with peers, can be particularly helpful for veterans dealing with PTSD. Studies have found that that veterans with PTSD diagnoses experienced a decrease in the symptoms of PTSD, including depression, anxiety, and perceived stress.

According to research at the University of California (UC) at Berkeley, nature is proving to be awesome medicine for PTSD. The awe we feel in nature can dramatically reduce symptoms of PTSD and physiological changes in war veterans during white-water rafting trips. UC Berkeley found that a week after river-rafting, on average, a 29% reduction in PTSD symptoms, a 21% decrease in general stress, a 10% improvement in social relationships, a 9% improvement in life satisfaction and an 8% increase in happiness.

- 3) **SUPPORT.** The Peace Officers' Research Association of California (PORAC), in support writes that this bill expands eligibility for existing vehicle fee exemptions for disabled veterans and other decorated service members by increasing the allowable vehicle weight threshold. PORAC states this change acknowledges that many contemporary vehicles, such as trucks and SUVs, veterans and their families often use, exceed the current weight threshold. As a result, those who should qualify for this benefit may have been overlooked and by updating this limit ensures that this long-standing benefit remains accessible and continues to serve its intended purpose.
- 4) **DOUBLE REFERRAL.** This bill is double referred, it passed on a vote of 16-0 on April 6, 2026, in the Assembly Transportation Committee.
- 5) **RELATED LEGISLATION.** AB 2645 (Jeff Gonzalez) requires DMV to coordinate with the Department of Veterans Affairs to offer mobile services at each veterans' home in California at least once every year.
- 6) **PREVIOUS LEGISLATION.**
- a) AB 2509 (Fong), Chapter 382, Statutes of 2022, exempts Purple Heart recipients from vehicle registration fees beginning January 1, 2027.
 - b) AB 459 (Mathis) of 2021, would have exempted partially disabled veterans from vehicle registration fees. AB 459 died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
 - c) SB 1259 (Runner) of 2016, would have exempted veterans with specialized license plates to be exempt from toll payments. SB 1259 was referred to the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee, but the hearing was cancelled at request of author.

- d) SB 386 (Cogdill) Chapter 357, Statutes of 2007, extended vehicle registration exemptions to surviving spouses of former American prisoners of war and Congressional Medal of Honor recipients.
- e) AB 279 (Cohn), Chapter 201, Statutes of 2004, allows the un-remarried, surviving spouse of a person issued Purple Heart special license plates to retain the special plates upon the death of a Purple Heart recipient.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Highway Patrolmen
Peace Officers Research Association of California

Opposition

None on file.

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