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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 1775	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	6/22/26
<b>Author:</b>	Ward		
<b>Version:</b>	5/18/26		
<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
<b>Consultant:</b>	Diego Nelson		

**Subject:** Veterans support

## DESCRIPTION

### Summary:

Provides employment, housing, and discharge upgrade support for service members and veterans who are discharged, or receive a discharge, solely as a result of Executive Order 14183, issued on January 27, 2025.

### Existing law:

1. Provides that licensing boards within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) are responsible for establishing minimum qualifications and levels of competency and for licensing persons who seek to engage in the professions and occupations regulated by those boards. (BPC § 101.6)
2. Requires a board within DCA to expedite, and authorizes the board to assist, the initial licensure process for an applicant who provides satisfactory evidence that the applicant served as an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States and was honorably discharged. (BPC § 115.4(a))
3. Requires a board within DCA to expedite, and authorizes the board to assist, the initial licensure process for an applicant who provides satisfactory evidence that the applicant is an active duty member of a regular component of the Armed Forces of the United States enrolled in the United States Department of Defense SkillBridge program. (BPC § 115.4(b); 10 U.S.C. § 1143(e))
4. Requires DCA to compile information on military and spouse licensure into an annual report to the Legislature, including information on temporary licenses, expedited licenses, licenses issued and denied, waived renewal fees, and average processing timelines. (BPC § 115.8)
5. Requires most boards within DCA to expedite the licensure process and waive associated fees for an applicant who holds a current license in another state and is married to, or in a domestic partnership or other legal union with, an active duty member of the Armed Forces assigned to a duty station in California under official active duty military orders. (BPC § 115.5)
6. Requires boards within DCA to issue a temporary license to an applicant who is married to, or in a domestic partnership or other legal union with, an active duty member of the Armed Forces assigned to a duty station in California under official active duty military orders, if specified requirements are met. (BPC § 115.6)

7. Authorizes CalVet to assist veterans and their dependents and survivors in obtaining privileges, preferences, care, and compensation provided under federal and state law. (MVC §§ 690–699.5)
8. Requires CalVet, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, to establish the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program to help fund service providers that educate veterans about discharge upgrades and assist veterans in filing discharge upgrade applications. (MVC § 885)
9. Authorizes CalVet, under the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program, to prioritize veterans who can demonstrate that their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, or sexual orientation. (MVC § 885)
10. Establishes the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Act of 2014 to provide for the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable multifamily supportive housing, transitional housing, affordable rental housing, or related facilities for veterans and their families to allow veterans to access and maintain housing stability. (MVC §§ 987.001–987.011)

This bill:

1. Requires a board within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to expedite, and authorizes the board to assist, the initial licensure process for an applicant who provides satisfactory evidence that the applicant served as an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States and was honorably discharged or received a discharge solely as a result of Executive Order 14183.
2. Requires DCA’s annual military and spouse licensure report to include the number of expedited license applications received from honorably discharged military members and military spouses, as well as individuals who received a discharge solely as a result of Executive Order 14183.
3. Requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), through the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program, to help fund service providers that, at no cost, educate veterans about discharge upgrades and assist qualifying veterans in filing discharge upgrade applications.
4. Requires CalVet to prioritize veterans receiving discharge upgrade assistance if they can demonstrate that their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, sexual orientation, or if they can demonstrate that their characterization of service was connected to gender identity.
5. Requires CalVet, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, to establish the Veteran’s Housing and Supportive Services Grant Program to help fund service providers that provide housing support for veterans being discharged from service at no cost.
6. Requires CalVet to develop criteria, procedures, and accountability measures necessary to implement the Veteran’s Housing and Supportive Services Grant Program.
7. Requires CalVet to prioritize veterans receiving housing and supportive services if they can demonstrate that their less than honorable characterization of service was connected to a mental health condition, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or harassment, sexual orientation, or if they can demonstrate that their characterization of service was connected to gender identity.

**BACKGROUND**

For decades, LGBTQ+ service members have faced shifting federal policies that affected whether they could serve openly, remain in uniform, and access veterans benefits after separation. Under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT), gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members were permitted to serve only if they concealed their sexual orientation. Although DADT was repealed more than a decade ago, its legacy continues for many veterans who received less than honorable discharges, lost access to benefits, or were pushed out of military service because of who they were.

The repeal of DADT did not resolve the status of transgender service members. For many years, transgender individuals were barred from serving openly based on military policies that treated gender identity or gender dysphoria as disqualifying. In 2015, the Department of Defense began reviewing the policy and readiness implications of allowing transgender personnel to serve openly. That review included a RAND Corporation study, which found that allowing transgender service members to serve openly would likely have only a minimal impact on readiness, health care costs, and unit cohesion. In 2016, the federal government lifted the ban and allowed qualified transgender individuals to serve openly in the Armed Forces.

That policy has changed repeatedly across presidential administrations. In 2017, the Trump Administration reversed the open-service policy and restricted military service by transgender individuals. In 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 14004, which again allowed qualified transgender individuals to serve openly and prohibited discrimination against service members based on gender identity. However, on January 27, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14183, titled “Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness.” The order directs the Department of Defense to revise military standards and policies related to gender dysphoria, gender identity, use of pronouns, and access to sex-specific facilities. It also rescinded the prior federal policy that allowed qualified transgender individuals to serve openly in the Armed Forces.

Following implementation of Executive Order No. 14183 and related Department of Defense guidance, transgender service members faced potential separation from military service. These separations arose from a federal policy addressing gender identity-related service standards rather than from individual misconduct, poor performance, or case-specific findings that a service member could not meet military requirements. The separation process also created uncertainty for affected service members, including unclear timelines, differences in implementation across branches, delays in paperwork, abrupt discharge notices, and potential loss of pay, benefits, and housing stability.

Litigation challenging the policy remains ongoing. In June 2026, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit held that the policy likely violated equal protection principles as applied to current service members and affirmed a preliminary injunction preventing the federal government from expelling active duty transgender service members while further proceedings continue. The court did not require the military to accept new transgender applicants while the litigation continues.

As a result, affected service members may be in different positions depending on their branch, status, and stage in the separation process. Some may remain in service while litigation proceeds, while others may have already begun or completed separation. For service members facing discharge, the loss of military employment can affect housing, health care, income, benefits, and the transition to civilian work. These challenges may be more significant when a discharge

characterization limits access to state or federal veterans benefits or when a former service member must seek a discharge upgrade.

### COMMENT

According to the author: “AB 1775 is a vital lifeline to ensure we provide critical housing, employment, and transition-to-civilian-life support for service members being discharged from the U.S. military as a result of President Donald Trump’s Executive Order (EO) 14183, which targets transgender service members. California has a responsibility to step in when the federal government turns its back on people who served honorably. These service members are being forced out of service not because of misconduct or performance, but because of who they are. AB 1775 ensures that California does not compound that injustice by leaving veterans without housing, jobs, or a clear path to stability.”

While California cannot dictate federal military policy, it can determine how the state responds to the immediate civilian impacts facing affected service members. Many of these individuals already live in California or are expected to return here after separation. Veterans’ organizations estimate that approximately 40 percent of affected service members will reside in the San Diego region, 20 percent in Los Angeles, 15 percent in Sacramento, 15 percent in San Francisco, and 10 percent in rural or Northern California communities.

The practical impact of these separations can be immediate and severe. Implementation has varied across military branches, with delayed paperwork, unclear timelines, and inconsistent treatment of voluntary and involuntary separations. As of September 2025, roughly 800 Army separation packets were pending legal review at the Pentagon, with active duty cases prioritized over National Guard cases. Some service members have reportedly received discharge notices with as little as 24 hours’ warning, disrupting pay, benefits, housing, and family stability.

AB 1775 addresses these state-level consequences in three ways. First, it extends existing expedited professional licensing protections to service members discharged solely as a result of Executive Order No. 14183. This provision does not waive licensing standards or alter education, training, examination, background check, or competency requirements. It only ensures that eligible applicants are not delayed in entering licensed civilian professions because their discharge was tied to the federal policy rather than misconduct or poor performance. However, the manner in which an applicant would establish satisfactory proof that the separation was solely the result of Executive Order No. 14183 remains to be determined, including what documentation would be sufficient and how licensing boards would verify that basis for discharge.

The bill strengthens the Veteran’s Military Discharge Upgrade Grant Program by requiring no-cost discharge upgrade assistance and adding gender identity to the prioritization criteria. A less than honorable discharge can limit access to benefits, complicate employment, create housing barriers, and carry long-term stigma. This provision builds on California’s prior efforts to assist veterans whose discharge characterization may have been connected to trauma, discrimination, sexual orientation, or other circumstances that do not reflect the totality of their service.

The bill establishes the Veteran’s Housing and Supportive Services Grant Program within CalVet, subject to appropriation. The program would fund service providers that offer no-cost

housing support for veterans being discharged from service. This provision responds to documented housing challenges among transgender veterans, who were found in one Veterans Health Administration study to face housing instability at almost three times the rate of cisgender veterans.

The broader transition from military service to civilian life is also a known period of vulnerability. A recent Government Accountability Office report found that more than 210,000 service members separated from the military in fiscal year 2023 and noted that veterans in the first year after separation experience a suicide rate about 2.5 times higher than the active duty population. The report identified loss of purpose, financial strain, family strain, and difficulty readjusting to civilian life as transition-related challenges. The need for this support is backed by research showing that transgender veterans receiving care through the Veterans Health Administration experienced housing instability at nearly triple the rate of cisgender veterans.

Prior legislation:

SJR 6 (Caballero, et al), Resolution Chapter 173, Statutes of 2024, urged the President and the Congress of the United States to address, with effective policies, the issue of servicemembers who were unjustly discharged under “*Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*” or predecessor provisions, in order to unify efforts to upgrade discharges issued under the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy, and to restore benefits.

AB 325 (Irwin), Chapter 377, Statutes of 2022, requires CalVet to establish the Grant Program to help fund service providers who will educate veterans about discharge upgrades and assist veterans in filing discharge upgrade applications at little or no cost.

AJR 44 (Bloom), Resolution Chapter 164, Statutes of 2014, urges the DoD, Congress, and the President to create a more efficient process of upgrading the status of those who were “dishonorably” or other than honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces, and to provide benefits, including applicable spousal benefits, to those veterans discharged solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

AJR 19 (Pan), Resolution Chapter 154, Statutes of 2013, urges Congress and the President to provide benefits, including applicable spousal benefits, to those veterans discriminated against solely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

AB 1505 (Pan), Chapter 397, Statutes of 2012, requires the state to reinstate benefits to veterans that have their benefits reinstated by the federal government if the benefits were originally denied solely on the basis of sexual orientation. Requires CalVet to distribute information regarding military discharge upgrades.

**POSITIONS**

**Sponsor:** Equality California (Co-Sponsor)  
Out in National Security (Co-Sponsor)  
Transgender Military Hub (Co-Sponsor)

**Support:** California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls  
California Association of Veteran Service Agencies  
California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus  
California State Board of Pharmacy

CFT – A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO  
Los Angeles LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce  
Modern Military Association of America  
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California

**Oppose:** None Received

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