

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
 Buffy Wicks, Chair
 AB 2203 (Tangipa) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

Policy Committee:	Higher Education	Vote:	10 - 0
	Military and Veterans Affairs		8 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires, beginning with the 2028-29 academic year, each campus of the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCCs), and requests each campus of the University of California (UC), that administers a priority enrollment system to provide priority enrollment to a student who receives a California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) fee waiver or who is using any federal GI Bill benefits.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs of approximately \$140,000 for the CCCs, collectively statewide, to implement a new category of priority registration. According to the CCC Chancellor’s Office, there are approximately 5,000 veteran students who would meet eligibility criteria for priority enrollment under this bill.
- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the campuses of the UC and the campuses of the CSU. Both segments report a significant reduction in potential cost exposure to their systems due to the delayed implementation of the bill’s requirements to the 2028-29 academic year.

The UC Office of the President notes the bill would add about 6,500 eligible students to the existing priority registration student population at the UC, currently comprised of students with special needs, student parents, and foster youth.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

California has a long tradition of supporting the men and women who serve our country, as well as their families. Many veterans and their dependents rely on programs such as the CalVet College Fee Waiver and the federal GI Bill to access higher education. However, when students cannot enroll in required courses due to limited class availability, they may face unnecessary delays that prevent them from graduating on time. AB 2203 ensures that students using these earned educational benefits receive priority registration so they can enroll in the courses they need, complete their degrees efficiently, and fully utilize the benefits made available through their service.

- 2) **Background.** The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) administers the College Fee Waiver for Veteran Dependents (CalVet fee waiver), which waives mandatory

system-wide tuition and fees at any CCC, CSU, or UC campus. This program does not cover the expense of books, parking, or room and board. The waiver defines an eligible recipient as the natural or adopted child or stepchild of a veteran with a service-connected disability or who died in service, the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran, the spouse of a permanently disabled veteran, or a Medal of Honor recipient and their children. Similarly, the federal GI bill provides education benefits, such as coverage for in-state rates of tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance, and a book stipend to military veterans and, in some cases, their dependents.

Current law requires the CSU and CCC, and requests the UC, to provide students who were members of the United States Armed Forces with priority enrollment, up to 15 years after leaving state or federal active duty. This bill would expand eligibility for military service-related priority enrollment by requiring it for CalVet fee waiver and federal GI Bill recipients.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 892 (Grove), of the current legislative session, removes the post-military service time limit of 15 years for priority enrollment eligibility for former members of the United States Armed Forces beginning July 1, 2027.

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