

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Pilar Schiavo, Chair

AB 2219 (Schiavo) – As Amended April 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Veterans.

SUMMARY: Enhances the collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs). Improves accreditation training CalVet provides to CVSOs to reduce disparities, improve public awareness, and update data collection.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a CVSO vacancy to be filled within 12 months and the appointee to obtain and maintain accreditation through CalVet within nine months after being appointed.
- 2) Requires CalVet to establish training requirements for accreditation that must include, but not be limited to, addressing disparities when accessing veterans' benefits, improving public awareness of free U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability claim resources, and ensuring data collection to monitor system improvements.
- 3) Requires CalVet, in consultation with the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO), no later than January 1, 2029, to establish a "statewide work queue" for claims assistance, and other services accessible to all CVSOs.
- 4) Requires CalVet to establish a separate workload unit category for services provided through the statewide work queue. Prohibits participation in the statewide work queue from negatively impacting performance-based funding calculations for CVSOs.
- 5) Defines "statewide work queue" to mean an electronic workload management system under the authority of CalVet that distributes disability claims and appeals CVSOs across the state, regardless of where the veteran lives.
- 6) Authorizes CalVet to review, adopt, amend, or repeal guidelines or terms, or both, to implement the statewide work queue.
- 7) Requires CalVet, in consultation with CACVSO to create a service capacity and performance framework for service capacity and performance to determine funding allocations for CVSOs.
- 8) Requires the service capacity and performance framework consider factors including, but not limited to, the size of the veteran population, workload activity, geographic access, participation rate of veterans, value of new or increased federal benefits obtained, organizational structure, and service-related measures that indicate the experience of a veteran receiving services for each CVSO.
- 9) Requires CalVet to prepare and submit a report to the Legislature, as specified, prior to making any significant changes to the funding allocation methodology in 6) above.

- 10) Requires CalVet, no later than January 1, 2029, and every three years thereafter, to prepare a report that analyzes the data regarding the configuration, structure, and operations of each CVSO. Requires the report to include:
 - a) The location of each CVSO, including satellite, mobile, and remote capabilities, and their hours of operation including hours for in-person and virtual appointments;
 - b) The total number of employees in each office, including those supporting veterans' benefits claims, administrative roles, supervisors, and outreach or specialized service staff;
 - c) The organizational placement of the CVSO within the county government structure, and its lines of reporting;
 - d) The primary sources of funding that support the operations of the CVSO, including county general fund support, state allocations, federal grants, and other grant-based or restricted funding streams.
 - e) A description of cross-program collaboration and services provided in coordination with employment services, behavioral health services, housing and homelessness programs, justice-involved veteran programs, and other initiatives serving at-risk veteran populations.
- 11) Requires CalVet in consultation with the CACVSO to develop a unified state-wide standard digital survey to measure veteran satisfaction with CVSO services.
- 12) Requires the survey to measure access, trust, service effectiveness, and overall experience while minimizing administrative burdens on counties.

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 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 because of the efforts of CVSOs, 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, known as the Faster Service for Veterans Act, will speed up the modernization of delivering assistance to veterans, facilitate easier access to their benefits and more efficient support in the process. This bill fosters a stronger partnership between CalVet and CVSOs, directs the collection of more meaningful data and will structure the offices in a way to better serve veterans. Additionally, it will establish a reliable satisfaction survey to promptly identify areas for improvement and make real-time adjustments. With this bill, we will ensure no veteran is overlooked in our commitment to their well-being.
- 2) **BACKGROUND.**
 - a) **History of Veterans' Benefits.** The support for veterans' benefits can be traced back to the Continental Congress of 1776, which enacted pensions for disabled soldiers during the Revolutionary War. In the 19th century, support was extended to widows and dependents of veterans. Founded at the height of the Great Depression, the Veterans Administration (VA) was formerly an independent government agency. It was elevated to a cabinet department in 1989 and renamed to the VA. The VA provided and continues to provide medical care, benefits, and essential services to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. The VA has a long history of achievements and persistent challenges. They have faced criticism for their long wait times and slow processing of

benefits. In addition to providing some health care services and disability compensation, the VA also provides vocational rehabilitation, education assistance, home loans, life insurance, and burial benefits to eligible veterans.

- b) County Veteran Service Officers.** CVSOs operate at the intersection of policy and people, providing vital support to veterans in offices of varying sizes and often under challenging conditions. CVSOs serve as the critical link between veterans and the wide array of benefits, services, and community networks essential for long-term success following military service. Fifty-six of California's 58 counties have CVSOs. The services provided by CVSOs are free to veterans and their families. CalVet and CVSOs are partners in California, with CVSOs serving as the front-line support for veterans and their families, while CalVet assists with claims development, representation, and appeals. CVSOs are a critical component in the state's efforts to work directly with individual veterans and their families to ensure our veterans receive the benefits they earned through their service to our nation. In addition to advocating for benefits, CVSOs also assist veterans in accessing employment, education, healthcare, family support, and opportunities that promote a sense of purpose, stability, and belonging. What sets this system apart is not only its extensive reach but also its dependable nature; when veterans reach out for assistance, CVSOs are consistently available to help.

Both the VA and the State of California offer resources and services to help veterans navigate the claims process. To assist veterans and their families in navigating the claims process, 29 states, including California, use the CVSO model, and six states use a state service officer model. The financial impact that CVSOs make for veterans and their families is easy to measure. According to the CACVSO annual report, the amount of new and increased federal benefits CVSOs were able to secure was more than \$687 million. What is not as easy to measure are the most meaningful outcomes that are not captured in standard metrics: a veteran connected to lifetime health care; a surviving spouse able to pursue education; a family restored to stability; a long-overdue recognition that restores dignity and pride. These outcomes are the direct result of the partnership, expertise, and advocacy of CVSOs and CalVet.

- 3) SUPPORT.** CACVSO writes in support of this bill that navigating the landscape of veteran benefits, from disability compensation and pensions to educational support and healthcare, can be an overwhelming process. CVSOs are a cornerstone of the state and county veteran service model because we provide the direct, localized expertise required to guide veterans through these complex systems. CVSOs rely heavily on CalVet for the thorough uniform training and oversight necessary to deliver high-quality claims support. While strong local and state partnerships have long sustained our work, this bill represents a crucial step toward modernizing our network and guaranteeing uninterrupted access to our offices.

CACVSO continues that beyond staffing, this bill tackles current hurdles by establishing a centralized, statewide work queue. This forward-thinking approach will allow veterans to connect with our representatives much more efficiently, significantly cutting down on wait times for remote appointments. Coupled with streamlined, statewide training requirements, this bill will foster greater expertise across California. It helps guarantee that veterans, service members, and their families will receive the exact same level of accurate, expert guidance regardless of which county they call home.

Numerous Congressionally chartered veteran organizations also wrote in support stating, CVSOs are the frontline connection for veterans navigating federal benefits. Current law permits counties to appoint CVSOs but sets no timeline for filling vacancies and no statewide standards for service delivery. When a CVSO position sits vacant, veterans in that county lose their primary point of access to earned benefits -- and the state loses the federal dollars those benefits bring into local economies. This bill addresses these gaps directly by requiring the vacancies to be filled within 12 months, mandates VA accreditation within nine months of appointment, and directs CalVet to stand up a statewide work queue by January 1, 2028. The work queue is particularly significant -- it would allow veterans in underserved or understaffed counties to access claims assistance through any participating CVSO office rather than waiting for their local office to have capacity. This bill also establishes a service capacity and performance framework that ties funding to measurable outcomes while protecting offices that participate in the statewide queue from being penalized in performance calculations.

- 4) **RELATED LEGISLATION.** AB 1638 (Ta) 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. AB 1638 is pending hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- 5) **PREVIOUS LEGISLATION.**
 - a) AB 684 (Ta) of 2023 was substantially similar to AB 1638 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

American Legion, Department of California
Amvets - Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California State Commanders Veterans Council
Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council

Opposition

None on file.

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