



- 8) Requires CalVet in consultation with the CACVSO to develop a unified state-wide standard digital survey, as specified, to measure veteran satisfaction with CVSOS services that utilizes, to the extent feasible, existing reporting mechanisms and data systems to minimize county administrative burden.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) CalVet estimates one-time General Fund (GF) costs of approximately \$500,000 over two years for two research staff and administrative support to conduct the study regarding the configuration, structure, and operations of each CVSOS. The initial report is due January 1, 2029. Subsequent reports are due every three years, which will each result ongoing, intermittent GF costs of an unknown amount, but likely less than the cost of the initial report.
- 2) CalVet indicates all other costs are minor and absorbable.
- 3) Local costs to counties of an unknown amount to administer the digital veteran satisfaction survey designed to collect feedback from veterans following appointments or services provided by county veterans service offices. The bill requires CACVSO to consult with CalVet in the development of the digital survey platform and requires CalVet, to the extent feasible, to utilize existing reporting mechanisms and data systems to minimize administrative burden on counties. These costs are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

**COMMENTS:**

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

This bill enhances collaboration between CalVet and CVSOSs to ensure California's veterans and their families receive the comprehensive support they truly deserve. This bill will better identify needs, improve access, and ensure no veteran falls through the cracks.

- 2) **Background.** CVSOSs, located in 56 of California's 58 counties, assist veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services accrued through military service and are authorized to represent veterans in the process for claiming federal benefits they are entitled to. Due to historically low levels of receipt of benefits by California's veterans, existing law authorizes annual funding in the state budget to CalVet for allocation to CVSOSs to assist veterans in claiming benefits.

By assisting veterans with accessing their benefits, CVSOSs bring additional federal funds into the state economy, and potentially reduce the dependence of veterans on state and local programs. Existing law requires CalVet to collect information on the additional federal veterans' benefits California veterans receive due to assistance by CVSOSs and to report this information the state Department of Finance for consideration in CalVet's annual budget determination. According to CalVet, during the 2024-25 fiscal year, CVSOSs assisted California veterans in accessing \$687 million in federal benefits.

Existing law authorizes the board of supervisors of each county to appoint a “county veterans service officer,” who must be a veteran, but sets no time limit for filling a vacancy and no statewide standards for service delivery.

This bill requires CVSO vacancies to be filled within 12 months, establishes minimum training standards for accreditation, and mandates accreditation within nine months of appointment. The bill also directs CalVet to implement a statewide work queue by January 1, 2028, that 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.

Under existing law each county is responsible for the compensation and expenses of its CVSO, but CalVet is required to pay a portion of these costs from state funds. Existing law provides an annual appropriation in the state Budget Act, currently funded at \$11 million, to CalVet to support CVSOs. CalVet must disburse these funds on a pro rata basis to counties that have established and maintain a CVSO according to a performance-based formula developed by CalVet.

This bill establishes a service capacity and performance framework that instead ties funding to measurable outcomes, such as participation rates of veterans, workload activity, and service satisfaction.

Existing law also requires CalVet to prepare a report each year that includes the activities of CVSOs related to federal benefits obtained. However, CVSOs are situated differently in different counties, making it difficult to accurately measure performance levels and funding needs. This bill requires an additional report focused on the configuration, structure and operations of each CVSO.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1638 (Ta), of this legislative session, provides any county with an active United States (U.S.) military base a stipend, upon appropriation, to maintain a CVSO, at least part time. AB 1638 is pending on this committee’s suspense file.

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