

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2219
Author: Schiavo (D), et al.
Amended: 4/8/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE MILITARY & VETERANS COMMITTEE: 4-0, 6/22/26
AYES: Archuleta, McNerney, Menjivar, Umberg
NO VOTE RECORDED: Grove

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/1/26
AYES: Durazo, Choi, Arreguín, Ashby, Cervantes, Laird, Seyarto

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 70-0, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Veterans

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill modernizes and standardizes the county veterans service officer program by requiring timely vacancy appointments, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) accreditation and training standards, improved data collection, a statewide work queue, a service capacity and performance framework, and a statewide digital survey to measure veteran feedback on County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) services.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Permits the board of supervisors of each county to appoint, prescribe the qualifications of, and fix the compensation of a county veterans service officer, who must be a veteran. (Military and Veterans Code Section 970(a).)
- 2) Requires a county veterans service officer to administer aid provided under state law, investigate claims, applications, or requests for aid, and perform any other veteran-related services requested by the county board of supervisors. (Military and Veterans Code Section 970(b).)
- 3) Permits two or more counties to jointly establish a single county veterans service office to serve all counties that agree to the joint office. (Military and Veterans Code Section 970(c).)
- 4) Requires a county veterans service officer to assist veterans, qualified former members of the Armed Forces, and dependents of deceased veterans or qualified former members in presenting and pursuing claims against the United States and establishing rights to benefits, privileges, preferences, care, or compensation under federal or state law. (Military and Veterans Code Section 971(a) and (c).)
- 5) Requires the compensation and expenses of county veterans service officers to be a county charge, but requires CalVet, out of available state moneys, to pay each county a portion of those costs in an amount determined by CalVet. (Military and Veterans Code Section 972(b).)
- 6) Provides that funds for county veterans service officers are to be provided in the annual Budget Act, and declares that 50 percent of the amount annually budgeted for county veterans service officers is approximately \$11 million. (Military and Veterans Code Section 972.1(a) and (d).)
- 7) Provides that funds appropriated to CalVet for county veterans service officers are to be disbursed each fiscal year on a pro rata basis to counties that have established and maintain a county veterans service office, in accordance with staffing levels and workload under a performance-based formula developed by CalVet. (Military and Veterans Code Section 972.1(b).)
- 8) Requires CalVet to annually determine the amount of new or increased monetary benefits paid to eligible veterans by the federal government that are attributable to the assistance of county veterans service officers, and to report that determination to the Department of Finance and the Legislature on or before October 1 of each year. (Military and Veterans Code Section 972.1(c).)

- 9) Requires the Department of Finance to review CalVet's determination in time to use the information in the annual Budget Act for CalVet's budget for the next fiscal year. (Military and Veterans Code Section 972.1(c).)
- 10) Requires CalVet to annually prepare a report on the activities of county veterans service officers, including the number of veterans and family members served, the number of claims filed, the annualized monetary value of benefits received by veterans and dependents due to county veterans service officer efforts, and a summary of other services, outreach events, Stand Downs, and job fairs. (Military and Veterans Code Section 974(a).)

This bill:

- 1) Requires a county veterans service officer vacancy to be filled within 12 months after the position becomes vacant.
- 2) Requires a newly appointed county veterans service officer to obtain and maintain accreditation from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs through CalVet within nine months after appointment.
- 3) Requires CalVet to establish minimum training requirements to obtain and maintain accreditation through CalVet. The training requirements must, without limitation, do all of the following:
 - a) Identify and, where supported by data, address disparities in access to earned benefits based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
 - b) Improve public awareness of free disability claim resources.
 - c) Ensure proper data collection to track system improvements.
- 4) Requires CalVet, in consultation with the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, by no later than January 1, 2029, to develop and implement a statewide work queue for appointments, claims assistance, and other services provided to veterans.
- 5) Requires the statewide work queue, by no later than January 1, 2029, to be operational and accessible to all county veterans service officers.
- 6) Requires CalVet to coordinate with the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers on the design, data-sharing protocols,

implementation, and integration of the statewide work queue with existing data systems.

- 7) Provides that participation in the statewide work queue shall not negatively impact performance-based funding calculations.
- 8) Requires CalVet to establish a separate workload unit category for services provided through the statewide work queue.
- 9) Defines “statewide work queue” to mean an electronic workload management system under CalVet’s authority that distributes disability claims and appeals among county veterans service offices across the state, regardless of where the veteran lives.
- 10) Authorizes CalVet to review, adopt, amend, or repeal guidelines or terms, or both, to implement these provisions, and exempts those guidelines or terms from the Administrative Procedure Act.
- 11) Requires CalVet, in consultation with the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, to develop a service capacity and performance framework to inform funding allocations for county veterans service offices.
- 12) Requires CalVet, before implementing any substantial modification to the funding allocation methodology, to submit a report to the Legislature describing the proposed framework and its anticipated fiscal and operational impact.
- 13) Requires the service capacity and performance framework to consider factors including, but not limited to:
 - a) The size of the veteran population.
 - b) Workload activity.
 - c) Geographic access.
 - d) The participation rate of veterans at that office.
 - e) The value of new or increased federal benefits obtained.
 - f) The organizational structure of the office.
 - g) Service-related measures that indicate the experience of a veteran receiving services from an office.

- 14) Prohibits the framework from treating participation in the statewide work queue as a negative metric when measuring a county veterans service office's performance.
- 15) Requires CalVet, by no later than January 1, 2029, and every three years thereafter, to prepare a report analyzing data regarding the configuration, structure, and operations of each county veterans service office.
- 16) Requires the report to include all of the following:
 - a) The location of each county veterans service office, including satellite, mobile, and remote capabilities, and hours of operation for in-person and virtual appointments.
 - b) The number of employees in each office, including employees whose primary duties support veterans benefits claims, employees in administrative roles, supervisors, and employees dedicated to outreach or specialized service populations.
 - c) The organizational placement of the county veterans service office within county government and its reporting relationship.
 - d) The primary sources of funding supporting the office, 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.
- 17) Requires CalVet to transmit the report to the Legislature, the Department of Finance, the State Department of Health Care Services, and the California Veterans Board.
- 18) Requires CalVet, in consultation with the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, to develop a standardized statewide digital survey platform to collect feedback from veterans following appointments or services provided by county veterans service offices.
- 19) Requires the survey platform to measure access, trust, service effectiveness, and overall experience while minimizing administrative burdens on counties.

- 20) Requires CalVet, to the extent feasible, to use existing reporting mechanisms and data systems to minimize administrative burdens on counties.
- 21) Provides that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill contains state-mandated costs, reimbursement shall be made pursuant to existing law.

Background

County veterans service officers are the primary local point of contact for many veterans and their families seeking assistance with federal, state, and local benefits. Their services are provided free of charge and include assistance with disability compensation, pensions, health care, education, employment, housing-related referrals, family support, and other services that help veterans successfully transition to and remain stable in civilian life.

To assist veterans and their families in navigating the claims process, 29 states, including California, use the county veterans service officer model, while six states use a state service officer model. California's system is locally administered, which means that services may vary significantly by county. Offices may differ in staffing levels, county government placement, appointment availability, walk-in access, after-hours services, virtual services, satellite or mobile service options, outreach capacity, and coordination with other local programs.

CalVet currently collects certain annual information on county veterans service office activity, including the number of veterans and family members served, claims filed, benefits obtained, and other services provided. However, the current reporting structure does not fully capture the configuration, structure, staffing, operating model, funding sources, demographic information, or veteran experience across offices. These gaps can make it more difficult to compare service capacity across counties, identify barriers to access, or determine where additional support, training, coordination, or resources may be needed.

County veterans service officers also generate measurable financial benefits for veterans and their families by helping them obtain new or increased federal benefits. According to the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers' annual report, "California county veterans service officers secured more than \$687 million in new and increased federal benefits for veterans and their families." Beyond the direct monetary value of claims, county veterans service officers help veterans and dependents access long-term health care, education benefits, family stability, and recognition of service-connected conditions or other earned benefits.

Comments

According to the author: “AB 2219, the Faster Service for Veterans Act! Last year, while working on SB 694, I made it my mission to connect with colleagues, stakeholders, and our amazing veterans. It was vital to me to hear what we’re doing right in linking veterans and their families with the benefits and services they’ve earned, as well as to discover areas where we can create impactful enhancements.

CVSOs, are incredible local champions who embody the spirit of duty! They stand at the dynamic crossroads where policy merges with the brave individuals who have served our nation. But they do so much more than just advocate for benefits! CVSOs are essential in linking veterans to amazing opportunities in employment, education, healthcare, and family support—helping to foster a strong sense of purpose, stability, and belonging.

AB 2219 will accelerate the modernization of assistance delivery to veterans, facilitate easier access to their benefits, and provide more efficient support to those who have selflessly served our nation. This bill improves collaboration between CalVet and CVSOs to ensure that California’s veterans and their families receive the comprehensive support they truly deserve.”

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) estimates one-time General Fund 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 CVSO. Subsequent reports that are due every three years will each result in additional, unknown General Fund costs that are likely to be less than the cost of the initial report.
- This bill could result in additional, unknown local costs to counties to administer the digital veteran satisfaction survey designed to collect feedback from veterans following appointments or services provided by county veterans service offices. These activities could be determined to be reimbursable by the Commission on State Mandates.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

American Legion, Department of California
AMVETS, Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California Association of Veterans Service Agencies (CAVSA)
California State Commanders Veterans Council
City of Fairfield
Los Angeles County
Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
Shasta County Board of Supervisors
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 70-0, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Gabriel, Garcia, Hoover, Lackey, Lowenthal, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez, Wilson

Prepared by: Diego Nelson / M.&V.A. / (916) 651-1503
8/14/26 15:38:19

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