

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2531 (Irwin) – As Amended March 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Health	Vote:	12 - 3
	Military and Veterans Affairs		6 - 2

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

SUMMARY:

This bill authorizes a Medi-Cal enrolled provider to apply for grant funding from the California Reproductive Health Equity Program within the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) if they provide services to patients who are veterans who do not have access to health care coverage that includes abortion and contraception, as specified.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Adds patients who are veterans, as defined, to those served by the California Reproductive Health Equity Program (also known as the Uncompensated Care Fund).
- 2) Requires the services, to the extent services provided are covered in the Medi-Cal or Family Planning and Planning, Access, Care, and Treatment (PACT) program, to be provided at no cost or a reduced cost to a veteran who meets both of the following criteria:
 - a) Has health care coverage that does not include abortion or is unable to access abortion or contraception care through the U.S. department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system.
 - b) Is not otherwise eligible to receive both abortion and contraception care at no cost through the Medi-Cal and Family PACT programs.
- 3) Defines “veteran” to mean a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service of the U.S. or as a member of the National Guard who was called to, and released from, active duty or active service for at least 90 consecutive days and who was discharged or released: (a) under conditions other than dishonorable, (b) due to a service-connected disability within that 90-day period, or (c) solely as a result of Executive Order No. 14183, issued on January 27, 2025, and which bans transgender individuals from military service.
- 4) Requires CalVet to publish a link to the abortion.ca.gov website on the women veterans’ page of CalVet’s internet website.
- 5) Makes finding and declarations regarding women veterans of reproductive age in California.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Cost pressures of an unknown amount, possibly high hundreds of thousands of dollars per year, to provide funding to providers serving eligible veterans through the Uncompensated Care Fund. HCAI notes that, because all funds for the Uncompensated Care Fund have been expended or

awarded. HCAI anticipates administrative costs to implement this bill would be minor and absorbable.

CalVet anticipates absorbable costs to add a link to the abortion.ca.gov website.

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.** This bill is sponsored by Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California. According to the author:

A recent rule implemented by the Trump administration has imposed upon the entire VA system one of the most severe abortion bans in the country, and California's VA providers are beholden to this federal ban despite California's state constitutional protections. To address this issue, [this bill] would expand access to the Uncompensated Care grant program for veterans whose health care coverage does not include abortion. By expanding this eligibility, California ensures that that the people who have served our country are not left without healthcare due to the backwards and inequitable policies of the Trump Administration.

- 2) **Background. *Uncompensated Care Fund.*** AB 2134 (Weber) Chapter 562, Statutes of 2022 established the California Uncompensated Care Fund within HCAI to ensure abortion and contraception services are affordable for and accessible to all patients and to provide financial support for safety net providers of these services. People at or below 400% of the federal poverty level who are uninsured or have health care coverage that does not include abortion and contraception are eligible for care from the Uncompensated Care Fund. This bill expands that eligibility to include veterans. The 2022-23 state budget provided \$40 million to establish and administer the Uncompensated Care Fund. Because those funds have been expended or awarded, HCAI states additional funding would be necessary to support a future grant cycle in which providers serving eligible veterans could receive funding. Assemblymember Bonta has requested \$30 million over three years (\$10 million per year) in the state budget to sustain the Uncompensated Care Fund.

VA Final Rule on Reproductive Health Services. On December 31, 2025, the VA published its final rule reinstating exclusions on abortions and abortion counseling from the VA medical benefits package. The abortion exclusions had been removed in 2022. The VA also reinstated exclusions on abortion and abortion counseling for the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the VA (CHAMPVA) to "ensure that VA provides only needed and medically necessary and appropriate care to our nation's heroes."

- 3) **Opposition.** The California Family Council (CFC) argues this bill directs the state website to promote abortion services without equally presenting alternatives. CFC contends that research consistently shows that women facing unintended pregnancies benefit from full information about all available options, and that many who choose alternatives to abortion report greater long-term psychological well-being. CFC states women veterans face elevated

rates of trauma, mental health challenges, and crisis pregnancies, and concludes that directing this demographic toward abortion services through a state-run platform, without ensuring robust referrals to comprehensive support services, risks compounding harm rather than alleviating it.

- 4) **Related Legislation.** AB 2540 (Stefani) requires a student health center on a campus of the California State University, University of California, or community college to promote awareness of the services for abortion by medication techniques that the student health center offers. AB 2540 is pending in this committee.

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