
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 264	Hearing Date:	7/14/25
Author:	Carrillo		
Version:	1/16/25 Introduced		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Jenny Callison		

Subject: Veterans: benefits

DESCRIPTION

Summary:

Eliminates the prohibition on a child of a veteran, an unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran, or spouse of a disabled veteran from receiving a tuition waiver from the state while also accessing other state or federal educational benefits.

Existing law:

Prohibits a dependent of a veteran from receiving certain educational benefits during the time the dependent is entitled to receive specified federal educational benefits or duplicate assistance from any other government source.

This bill:

Repeals that prohibition.

BACKGROUND

State Benefits:

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) administers the College Fee Waiver for Veteran Dependents, which waives mandatory system-wide tuition and fees at any California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU), or University of California (UC) campus. This program does not cover the expense of books, parking, or room and board. There are four plans under which dependents of veterans may be eligible, Plans A, B C, and D.

Federal Benefits:

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers education benefits for veterans' dependents and survivors. Two main programs offer educational assistance to veterans' survivors and dependents. The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship (Fry Scholarship) is for children and spouses of active duty servicemembers who died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001, or members of the Selected Reserve who died from a service-connected disability on or after September 11, 2001. The Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program, also called Chapter 35, offers education and training to qualified dependents of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled because of a service-related

condition, or who died while on active duty or as a result of a service-related condition. DEA recipients receive a monthly payment to help cover the cost of college or graduate degree programs, career training certificate courses, educational and career counseling, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. The current funding rate for DEA recipients is \$1,536 per month for 36 months.

The Fry Scholarship is *not* subject to the concurrent benefit prohibition, while the DEA is.

COMMENT

According to the author: “Currently, the spouses and children of disabled veterans are eligible for both the California College Tuition Fee Waiver and Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA). Veterans have earned these benefits through the severity of their injuries during their time of service, including the hundreds of thousands who live within my district. Due to inflation, rising tuition rates, and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an exacerbated need to accept both programs simultaneously.

California has seen the positive impact that higher educational programs have had on the lives of veterans and their families, and there isn’t a clear justification for denying access to both forms of aid concurrently. By repealing this outdated prohibition, we honor our veterans and their time of service while making tangible differences in the lives of those who sacrificed greatly for our nation.”

Fiscal Impact: According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) CalVet anticipates no additional costs to the department.
- 2) Potential costs to each of the following:
 - a) UC estimates ongoing General Fund costs of \$1.2 million annually, with incremental cost increases as tuition rises each year, to provide additional fee waivers under the California College Tuition Fee Waiver program. This estimate is based on the number of new undergraduates, continuing undergraduates, and graduate students receiving Chapter 35 benefits who do not currently qualify for the program. The increases in demand for the federally-funded DEA program would not have an impact on the state.
 - b) The CCC Chancellor's Office estimates ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund costs of an unknown amount to provide additional fee waivers to newly eligible students. The Chancellor's Office indicates it is difficult to predict the number of additional CalVet fee waivers that will be issued, but asserts this bill would only affect a small population of students, and that these students may already be receiving a California Promise Grant available to students with financial need, regardless of military status.
 - c) CSU indicates that the cost to provide additional fee waivers as a result of this bill is difficult to determine since the number of students that will utilize the benefit is unknown

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author.

Support: 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
CFT, AFT, AFL-CIO
Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC)
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council

Oppose: None on File.

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