

- c) A Congressional Medal of Honor recipient or their surviving spouse. (VEH §9105)
- 3) Requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), before issuing a special license plate to a disabled person or disabled veteran, to require the submission of a certificate signed by the relevant physician, nurse practitioner, certified nurse-midwife, or physician assistant, substantiating the disability, unless the applicant's disability is readily observable and uncontested. (VEH §5007)
- 4) Specifies that for a disabled veteran, DMV shall accept, in lieu of the certificate from a medical provider, a certificate from a county veterans service officer, the Department of Veterans Affairs, or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs that certifies that the applicant is a disabled veteran. (VEH §5007)

This bill:

- 1) Extends eligibility for the Disabled Veteran License Plate and associated fee waivers to all disabled veterans rated 100 percent permanent and total, regardless of whether their qualifying mobility condition is service connected.
- 2) Expands the definition of disabled veteran to include individuals with the following conditions:
 - a) Cannot walk without the use of, or assistance from, an assistant device, including a brace, cane, crutch, another person, or a prosthetic device, wheelchair, or similar device.
 - b) Has visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses or visual acuity of more than 20/200 but with a limited field of vision in which the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle of 20 degrees or less.
 - c) Cannot walk 200 feet without stopping to rest.
 - d) Is restricted by lung disease to the extent that the person's forced (respiratory) expiratory volume for one second when measured by spirometry is less than one liter, or the person's arterial oxygen tension (pO₂) is less than 60 mm/Hg on room air while the person is at rest.
 - e) Has a cardiac condition to the extent that the person's functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to standards set by the American Heart Association.

- f) Is severely limited in the ability to walk because of an arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic condition.
- g) Has a disorder of the foot that, in the opinion of a physician, limits or impairs the person's ability to walk, or has another debilitating condition that, in the opinion of a physician or a person authorized by applicable law to practice medicine in a hospital or other health facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, limits or impairs the person's ability to walk.
- h) Uses portable oxygen.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* According to the author, "California prides itself for how it takes care of veterans, especially those who were seriously injured while defending our country or are disabled. But current California law discriminates against disabled veterans by making it tougher for them to access parking benefits. For many veterans, a DV license plate is not merely a parking accommodation, it is a symbol of service, sacrifice, and earned recognition. Without parity in California law, disabled veterans will continue to face barriers in accessing parking benefits to which they should be entitled. SB 1034 ensures parity for disabled veterans seeking to obtain disabled veterans parking placards from the DMV."
- 2) *Disabled Veteran (DV) License plates.* Veterans permanently disabled as a result of an injury or disease that occurred while on active service with the U.S. Armed Forces may be eligible for DV License Plates. A qualified disabled veteran is exempt from paying all fees (except fees for duplicate DV License Plates, certificates, or cards if they're lost, stolen, or damaged) on one vehicle. In addition to waiving all registration fees, the DV License Plate allows the owner the same parking privileges afforded to the disabled parking placard, including the ability to park in an on-street metered parking space at no charge. In 2024, DVM reported there were 29,361 disabled veteran plates in circulation.
- 3) *Application process.* In order to apply for a DV License Plate, an applicant must submit one of the following documents to DMV:
 - a) A Medical Certification form completed and signed by a licensed physician, surgeon, chiropractor, optometrist, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or certified nurse midwife who has knowledge of the disease and/or disability.

- b) A certification completed and signed by a County Veterans Service Officer.
- c) A certification completed and signed by an authorized representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).
- d) A certification completed and signed by an authorized representative of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

These options allow veterans multiple avenues for certifying their disabled veteran status.

- 4) *Alignment with federal definition.* This bill adds to the definition of “disabled veteran” a wide variety of disabling medical conditions, most of which are included in the federal definition of “persons with disabilities which limit or impair the ability to walk” (CFR §1235.2). California’s current definition is fairly unspecific. It defers largely to determinations made by the Department of Veterans Affairs or the military service from which the veteran was discharged. Specifically, a disabled veteran must have one of the following conditions: a diagnosed disease or disorder which substantially impairs or interferes with mobility, has lost, or has lost use of, one or more limbs, or has suffered permanent blindness.

This bill adds substantial specificity to that list of qualifications. For example, it adds those who cannot walk two hundred feet without stopping to rest and those who use portable oxygen. These conditions are included in the federal definition of a person with disabilities as it relates to the international symbol of access.

- 5) *Removing the link to active service injury.* The most significant change in this bill is the removal of the requirement that a disabled veteran’s disability be service related. This change will significantly expand eligibility for the disabled veteran license plate, which is currently only available to veterans permanently disabled as a result of an injury or disease that occurred while on active service with the U.S. Armed Forces. According to the bill’s sponsors, the change may result in an estimated 21,000 more veterans becoming eligible for the disabled veteran plate and registration fee waiver.
- 6) *Disabled person license plates.* The disabled person license plate grants the same parking privileges afforded to the disabled veteran license plate holders. The primary difference between the two plates is that the disabled veteran plate includes a registration fee waiver. The author’s office argues that the provisions

of this bill alleviate barriers veterans face in accessing parking benefits to which they should be entitled. However, a disabled veteran can access the parking benefits of the disabled person license plate regardless of the circumstances of their injury or disability. A disabled person license plate allows a driver to park in parking spaces with the International Symbol of Access (wheelchair symbol), next to a blue curb authorized for persons with disabilities parking, next to a green curb (green curbs indicate limited time parking) for as long as they wish, in an on-street metered parking space at no charge, and in an area that indicates it requires a resident or merchant permit. The disabled person license plate does not have any limitations on how the individual became disabled.

- 7) *Revenue loss.* Vehicle registration fees fund numerous essential state and local governmental services. The average fee paid during vehicle registration for an automobile is \$295, while a commercial truck is \$1,346 and a non-commercial truck is \$406. This includes the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Fee which funds the services of CHP, the Vehicle license Fee (VLF) which funds local government services such as public safety, and the Transportation Improvement Fee (TIF) which funds transit operations, road maintenance, and infrastructure repairs throughout the state. These fees are in addition to the base registration fee, which fund numerous state services, including DMV.

Furthermore, registration fees make up a substantial part of the Motor Vehicle Account (MVA). A February 2025 Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report found that for 2025-26, MVA revenues are estimated to total about \$5 billion. Of this amount, over \$4 billion is projected to come from vehicle registration fees. MVA is the primary funding source for CHP and DMV. According to the LAO, MVA is "rapidly heading for insolvency" as expenditures continue to outpace revenues. Specifically, MVA is projected to become insolvent in 2025/26 with deficits increasing in future years. As such, LAO recommends the Legislature set a high bar for considering approval of any proposals that create additional MVA cost pressures and accelerate the risk of insolvency.

The committee may wish to evaluate any proposals that may result in a significant loss of vehicle registration revenue. It is unclear to what extent the loss of these fees may result in the degradation of essential governmental services.

- 8) *Double Referral.* This bill has been double referred to the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

RELATED/PREVIOUS LEGISLATION:

AB 1765 (Alanis, 2026) – This bill would clarify that the disabled veteran license plate registration fee waiver can be applied to a commercial motor vehicle of less than 10,000 pounds unladen weight. *This bill is currently in the Assembly Transportation Committee.*

AB 1882 (Villapudua, 2024) – This bill would have revised eligibility criteria for the disabled veteran’s license plate and exempted a partially disabled veteran, as defined, from paying vehicle registration fees. *This was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*

AB 2837 (C. Garcia, 2022) – This bill would have reduced the disability rating required to be considered a disabled veteran from 100% to 70% for veterans that meet the definition of “disabled veteran.” *This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*

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

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, April 1, 2026.)

SUPPORT:

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

OPPOSITION:

None received