

Date of Hearing: June 30, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Pilar Schiavo, Chair

SB 1188 (Archuleta) – As Amended April 9, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps: home instruction, independent study, and private schools.

SUMMARY: Requires a local educational agency (LEA) offering a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program to permit membership in the JROTC program for homeschool pupils and directs the California Department of Education (CDE) to post information on existing JROTC programs and related eligibility requirements online and provide annual implementation guidance. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires a LEA offering a JROTC program within any of its schools to, consistent with federal law, to permit membership in the JROTC program for a homeschooled pupil who resides within the attendance area of the LEA and meets all applicable eligibility requirements for participation in the JROTC program other than enrollment in the school offering the JROTC program.
- 2) Defines "homeschooled pupil" to have the same meaning as the term "homeschooled student" used in Section 2031(f)(1) of Title 10 of the United States Code.
- 3) Requires CDE to make information about existing JROTC programs, including eligibility and application requirements for pupils, available on its website and distribute implementation guidance to LEAs on an annual basis.
- 4) Prohibits a pupil enrolled in a school that offers JROTC courses from being required to enroll in military science and tactics.
- 5) Authorizes the governing board or body of an LEA, rather than just a school district, maintaining a secondary school to establish its schoolsites courses in military science and tactics. complying with the laws of the United States made and provided with reference to JROTC units in educational institutions.
- 6) Defines "LEA" to mean a school district, charter school, or county office of education (COE).

EXISTING FEDERAL LAW:

- 1) Requires the Secretary of each military department to establish and maintain a JROTC, organized into units, at public and private secondary educational institutions, including Job Corps centers. (10 U.S. Code §2031)
- 2) States it is the purpose of the JROTC to instill in students in U.S. secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the U.S. (including an introduction to service opportunities in military, national, and public service), and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. (10 U.S. Code §2031)

- 3) Requires each public secondary educational institution that maintains a JROTC unit to permit participation by homeschooled students residing in the area served by the institution who are qualified for membership in the unit (but for lack of enrollment in the institution). (10 U.S. Code §2031(f)(1))
- 4) Provides federal support for JROTC programs, including assignment or certification of instructors, provision of curriculum materials and equipment, and partial reimbursement of instructor salaries, with remaining costs typically borne by the LEA. (various sections of federal code and regulation)

EXISTING STATE LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the governing board of any school district maintaining a secondary school to establish in the school courses in military science and tactics complying with the laws of the United States made and provided with reference to Reserve Officers Training Corps units in educational institutions. (Education Code (EC) 51750)
- 2) Prohibits any student from being required to enroll in any course in military science and tactics, as specified. (EC 51750)
- 3) Prohibits a public or private elementary or secondary school, childcare center, day nursery, nursery school, family daycare home, or development center to admit a student to that institution unless they have been fully immunized against specified diseases. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 120335)
- 4) Requires the governing board of each school district or institution to require documentary proof of each entrant's immunization status. Requires the governing board to prohibit from further attendance any student who failed to obtain the required immunization within legally specific time limits, unless the student is legally exempted. (HSC 120375)
- 5) Exempts a student who is in a home-based private school or a student who is enrolled in an independent study program, as specified, and does not receive classroom-based instruction, from immunization requirements. (HSC 120335)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill:

- 1) Could result in one-time General Fund costs in the tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars. Specifically, the CDE would be responsible for making information about JROTC programs on its website, including eligibility and application requirements, and distributing implementation guidance to LEAs on an annual basis. Presumably, the CDE would also need to identify which students qualify as "homeschooled" for purposes of participating in the program.
- 2) The bill's proposal allowing homeschooled students to participate in JROTC programs is not expected to result in an expansion in students eligible to participate since the provision merely codifies an existing federal requirement. Additionally, the number of JROTC units is typically subject to the availability of federal funds.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **PURPOSE OF THIS BILL.** According to the author, many military families choose to homeschool their kids, nearly twice as much as civilian families, due to the challenges that come with military life. These challenges can make it tough for families to adjust to new places and routines. To help, state policies that simplify access to activities like JROTC can provide much-needed stability and support family retention. By allowing homeschooled students to participate in JROTC, we can keep those military connections strong and offer valuable leadership development. California is taking a step forward with SB 1188, which makes it clear that homeschooled kids are entitled to join JROTC programs. This bill not only helps local education agencies offer better guidance but also aligns with military family values and enhances the homeschool experience with structured programs.
- 2) **BACKGROUND.** JROTC is a federally authorized program offered at participating secondary schools to promote citizenship, leadership, service, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment among students. The broader ROTC framework dates to the National Defense Act of 1916, and the modern JROTC program was significantly expanded by the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964. Federal law now directs the Secretary of Defense to establish and support JROTC units nationwide at eligible secondary educational institutions. Although JROTC is affiliated with the armed forces and is often taught by retired service members, it is structured as an educational program rather than a military enlistment requirement. Federal regulations have long described JROTC and the related National Defense Cadet Corps as programs intended to develop informed and responsible citizens and to foster favorable attitudes toward public and military service.

Current federal law mandates that public secondary educational institutions with a JROTC unit must allow homeschooled students residing in their service area to join, provided they meet the program's qualifications aside from being enrolled in that specific school. This provision is intended to ensure that homeschooled students are not barred from participation solely based on their educational setting. However, the federal statute focuses specifically on the relationship between homeschooled students and the JROTC unit and does not establish a comprehensive system for how access to public education varies across all educational entities.

In California, state law from 1976 allows school district governing boards to create military science and tactics courses in accordance with federal regulations. Importantly, no student enrolled at these secondary schools can be compelled to take these courses. This California statute was enacted before significant changes occurred in federal law and the overall structure of California's K-12 education system, including the rise of charter schools, independent study options, and other educational formats that exist beyond the conventional school district framework.

- 3) **SUPPORT.** The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) is the sponsor of this bill on behalf of military families in California. According to the DoD, this bill is vital for ensuring equitable access to the JROTC program for all students, including homeschooled children. JROTC is a well-regarded program for citizenship and leadership development, enhancing academic performance, graduation rates, self-esteem, and reducing disciplinary issues. It promotes values like discipline and teamwork that benefit students throughout their lives.

According to the DoD, federal law requires schools with JROTC programs to allow eligible homeschooled students to participate, many families face barriers at the local level. This is

especially true for military families, who homeschool at almost double the national average due to frequent relocations and often arrive in new districts unaware of their eligibility. This bill addresses these issues by translating federal requirements into state law and creating clear implementation processes. It mandates that the CDE provide annual guidance and make this information accessible online, ensuring school districts and families understand their rights.

4) DOUBLE REFERRAL. This bill is double referred, it passed the Assembly Committee on Education with a vote of 8-0 on June 17, 2026.

5) PREVIOUS LEGISLATION.

- a)** AB 1605 (Gallagher), Chapter 142, Statutes of 2023, defines, further, “Uniformed Services” and “military services” to include “Space Force” and prohibits a school district, COE, and charter school offering instruction in any of grades 9 to 12 that provides on-campus access to employers from excluding access to the military services.
- b)** AB 343 (Saldaña), Chapter 237, Statutes of 2009, enacts the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which addresses issues experienced by children of military families who transfer schools.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

U.S. Department of Defense (sponsor)
California Family Council
Military Services in California

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Patty Patten / M. & V.A. / (916) 319-3550