
SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 892 **Hearing Date:** 4/20/26
Author: Grove
Version: 2/23/26
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Diego Nelson

Subject: Public postsecondary education: priority registration: members and former members of the Armed Forces of the United States and State Guard

DESCRIPTION

Summary:

This bill, commencing July 1, 2027, eliminates the current time-based limitations on priority enrollment for current and former members of the United States Armed Forces. As a result, the California State University and community college districts would continue to be required, and the University of California would continue to be requested, to grant priority registration without regard to those timing or duration limits.

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the California State University (CSU) and community college districts, and requests the University of California (UC), to grant priority registration to eligible veterans and State Guard members. Ed. Code § 66025.8, subd. (a)
- 2) Provides that this priority registration benefit applies for four academic years and must be used within 15 years of leaving active duty. Ed. Code § 66025.8, subd. (a)
- 3) Defines eligible individuals as California residents who served in the Armed Forces or State Guard and received an honorable, general, or other than honorable discharge. Ed. Code § 66025.8, subd. (a)
- 4) Excludes individuals with a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge. Ed. Code § 66025.8, subd. (b)

This bill:

- 1) Sunsets the existing veteran priority registration provisions on July 1, 2027, and repeals those statutes on January 1, 2028.
- 2) Removes the requirement that veterans use the priority registration benefit within 15 years of separating from service.
- 3) Eliminates the current limitation restricting use to four academic years.
- 4) Takes effect on July 1, 2027.

BACKGROUND

California has long had one of the largest veteran populations in the nation, which has made the transition from military service to civilian life a significant state policy issue. For many veterans

and service members, postsecondary education is not simply an academic opportunity, but part of the broader reintegration process after active duty. Access to college can affect a veteran's ability to obtain civilian credentials, enter the workforce, increase earning potential, and build long-term stability for themselves and their families. From a military and veterans affairs perspective, educational access is therefore closely tied to the state's larger interest in supporting successful transition, reducing barriers after service, and ensuring that veterans are able to make full use of the benefits and opportunities available to them.

That transition, however, often does not occur on a traditional timeline. Many veterans do not move directly from active duty into the classroom. Instead, they may spend years addressing employment needs, family responsibilities, service-connected health conditions, or the general demands of reestablishing themselves in civilian life before they are ready to begin or return to school. The Legislature has recognized this reality over time. SB 892 reflects an understanding that veterans' educational pathways are often shaped by the unique circumstances of military service and transition, rather than by the immediate progression more typical of traditional students.

Under existing law, the California State University and community college districts are required, and the University of California is requested, to grant priority registration to qualifying current and former members of the United States Armed Forces who are California residents and meet specified discharge requirements. But current law only allows that benefit to be used for four academic years and within 15 years of leaving state or federal active duty. Priority registration gives eligible veterans and service members earlier access to coursework, which can be especially important in situations where required classes fill quickly and enrollment delays can postpone completion.

COMMENT

According to the author: "Veterans and State Guard members have earned every opportunity to succeed when they return to civilian life. Many do not have the ability to enroll in college immediately after their service because they are working, raising families, or addressing health needs. They should not lose access to priority registration simply because life requires them to wait. SB 892 ensures that priority registration is available whenever a veteran is ready to pursue higher education. By aligning California policy with the Federal Forever GI Bill, this measure guarantees that those who served our country can access the classes they need on a timeline that works for them. California should stand behind our veterans not just when they come home, but whenever they choose to build their future."

This bill removes the existing four-year duration limit and the 15-year post-service eligibility window for priority registration beginning July 1, 2027. Existing state law mirrors an older federal framework that limited when veterans could use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. In 2017, however, the federal Forever GI Bill eliminated the 15-year time limit for veterans discharged on or after January 1, 2013. This bill seeks to update California's priority registration statute to better reflect that federal change and ensure that veterans may access priority registration whenever they are ready to pursue higher education.

Removing these limits may improve access for veterans whose education has been postponed by work, caregiving responsibilities, disability, or other reintegration challenges. It may also better support mid-career retraining and lifelong learning by recognizing that many veterans pursue

higher education on delayed or interrupted timelines. The proposal would place veterans more in line with other priority registration groups under state law that are not subject to comparable time-based restrictions.

Previous legislation

AB 2133 (Blumenfield, 2012) extended the period to use the benefit to 15 years after leaving active duty. (Chapter 400, Statutes of 2012),

SB 813 (Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2011) expanded the priority registration eligibility period from 2 years to 4 academic years. (Chapter 375, Statutes of 2011)

POSITIONS

Sponsor: Author.

Support: Bakersfield College
California State University, Bakersfield
California State University, Office of the Chancellor
County of Kern
California State University, Fresno
Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce
Kern County Supervisor Chris Parlier
Kern County Supervisor Jeff Flores
Kyle Pennington, Fresno County Veterans Service Officer
Phillip Peters, Kern County Board of Supervisors, District 1
County of Fresno
Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office

Oppose: None

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