

CALIFORNIA SENATE
COMMITTEE ON
**MILITARY AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS**



Our Mission

*To Honor, Legislate and Advocate on behalf of
All who have worn our nation's
military uniform & defended our nation
Past . . . Present . . . and Future*

California State Senate

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs 2023-24 Legislative Summary and Status

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and defended our nation – past, present, and future.*

Introduction

The Senate Committee on Military & Veterans Affairs has jurisdiction on all bills pertaining to veterans, military affairs, and armories; and bills amending the state's Military and Veterans Code. The Committee also has oversight of all programs managed by the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) and the California Military Department (CMD).

This report provides a quick synopsis of bills considered by the Committee during the 2023-24 Legislative Session and is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of the bill. Bills that were passed by the Legislature and became law are followed by the chapter number and year enacted. For bills that did not become law, the last location of the bill in the legislative process is shown. Veto messages are included for bills vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom.

An electronic copy of this report is available under "Publications" on the Committee's web page at <https://svet.senate.ca.gov/>. Copies of bill analyses prepared by the Committee may be obtained at <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>.

SENATE BILLS

SB 73 (Sevarto) Employment Policy: voluntary veterans preference

This bill would provide that the granting of a veterans' preference pursuant to the bill, in and of itself, shall be deemed not to violate any local or state equal employment opportunity law or regulation, including, but not limited to, the antidiscrimination provisions of FEHA. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist any private employer in determining if an applicant is a veteran, to the extent permitted by law. The bill would prohibit a veterans' preference employment policy from being established or applied for the purpose or with the effect of unlawfully discriminating against an employment applicant on the basis of a protected classification, as specified. The bill would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2029.

Held in Judiciary Committee

SB 82 (Sevarto) Property taxation: disabled veterans' exp: eligibility letters

This bill would require a county assessor to accept an electronically generated letter of service-connected disability, as defined, in lieu of an original letter of service-connected disability, at the discretion of the claimant, for purposes of verifying eligibility for the above-described exemption. By imposing duties on local tax officials, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 205.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code proposed by AB 1361 to be operative only if this bill and AB 1361 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 773, Statutes of 2023

SB 228 (Roth) Civilian youth opportunities program

This bill would require the Adjutant General to additionally conduct the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program western Riverside County.

Chaptered by Secretary of State. Chapter 703, Statutes of 2023

SB 289 (Menjivar) Identification cards

This bill would additionally prohibit the department from charging a fee for an original or replacement identification card to an applicant who is a veteran of the United States Armed Forces and can provide the department with a specified veteran verification form.

Held in Transportation Committee

SB 656 (Nyuven)

Governor's Military Council

Existing law establishes the Governor's Military Council that advises the Governor on efforts to retain military installations and operations within the state. Under existing law, members of the council are appointed by the Governor and include bipartisan representatives from both houses of the Legislature, as specified. Existing law repeals the law establishing the council on January 1, 2026. This bill would extend that repeal date to January 1, 2029.

Held in Military & Veterans Affairs Committee

SB 726 (Archuleta/Grove) Property taxation: exemption: disabled veteran homeowners

This bill would exempt from taxation, on that part of the full value of the residence that does not exceed \$863,790, as provided, property owned by, and that constitutes the principal place of residence of, a veteran, the veteran's spouse, or the veteran and the veteran's spouse jointly, if the veteran is 100% disabled. The bill would provide an unmarried surviving spouse a property exemption in the same amount that they would have been entitled to if the veteran was alive and if certain conditions are met. The bill would require certain documentation to be provided to the county assessor to receive the exemption and would prohibit any other real property tax exemption from being granted to the claimant if receiving the exemption provided by the provisions of this bill. The bill would make these exemptions applicable for property tax lien dates occurring on or after January 1, 2024, but occurring before January 1, 2034. By imposing additional duties on local tax officials, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

Held in Rev and Tax Committee

SB 783 (Archuleta)

Veterans Suicide

This bill, until January 1, 2029, would authorize the Counties of Los Angeles and Nevada to create a veteran suicide prevention training pilot program to offer individuals in each county specialized training and certification in suicide prevention with military-connected populations. The bill would require the program to train individuals to identify indicators of elevated suicide risk and provide emergency crisis intervention and referrals for veterans, as specified.

This bill would require counties establishing the program to collaborate to hire a suicide prevention subject matter expert (SME) with expertise in implementation and dissemination of evidence-based practices and evidence-informed interventions with military-connected populations. The bill would require the SME to, among other things, develop an individualized intense training curriculum based on the needs of the counties and to develop a process for collaboration and communication with current community partners.

The bill would also require the counties in the program to submit a report to the Legislature on or before September 15, 2026.

Held in Military & Veterans Affairs Committee

SB 855 (Archuleta) Fair Employment and Housing Act veterans

This bill would make it an unlawful employment practice to require an employee who is a veteran, as defined, to work on November 11, known as Veterans Day, if specified conditions are met.

Held in Judiciary Committee

SJR 4 (Ochoa Bogh) Veteran Health Care

This measure urges the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to locate satellite Veterans Health Administration medical clinics on or near state veterans home campuses and further urges the United States Congress to provide federal funding for the operation of such satellite clinics.

Chaptered by Secretary of State. Res. Chapter 117, Statutes of 2023

SJR 6 (Caballero/Eggman) Don't Ask, Don't Tell: discharge characterizations

This measure would urge the President and the Congress of the United States to address the issue of servicemembers who were unjustly discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" with an effective policy to unify efforts to upgrade discharges issued under the DADT policy, and to restore benefits.

Held in Military & Veteran Affairs Committee

ASSEMBLY BILLS

AB 46 (Ramos, Mathis, Soria) Personal income taxes: exclusion: Military Services Retirement and Surviving Spouse Benefit Payment Act

This bill, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2024, and before January 1, 2034, would exclude from gross income retirement pay received by a taxpayer from the federal government for service performed in the uniformed services, as defined, during the taxable year. The bill, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2024, and before January 1, 2034, would also exclude from gross income annuity payments received by a qualified taxpayer, as defined, pursuant to a United States Department of Defense Survivor Benefit Plan during the taxable year. The bill would make related findings and declarations.

This bill also would include additional information required for any bill authorizing a new tax expenditure. The bill would require the Franchise Tax Board and the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide any data requested by the Legislative Analyst to write the report, as provided, and would make taxpayer information received by the Legislative Analyst subject to limitation on the collection and use of that information. By expanding the scope of a crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

In appropriations committee: held under submission

AB 322 (Mathis/Garcia) Veteran & Cal Nat Guard Supp Orientation Act of 2023

This bill, commencing no later than the 2025–26 academic year, would require each campus of the California State University and the California Community Colleges, and would request each campus of the University of California, to include within first-year student and transfer student orientations the location and contact information of the campus point of contact for students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and members of the California State Guard and the California National Guard, and their dependents. This bill will also require and request the campuses make available in hard copy form at the location of the campus point of contact a document that includes information on policies, resources, and services for these students and their dependents, as specified, and post the document, along with other information available to these students and their dependents, on the campus's internet website.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 801, Statutes of 2023

AB 718 (Ta) Veterans: mental health

This bill would require the department to establish a program to fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, an academic study of mental health among women veterans in California, as specified. The bill would require the department to submit a report summarizing the findings and recommendations of the study to the Legislature no later than July 31, 2025. This bill would make these provisions inoperative on July 31, 2025, and would repeal them as of January 1, 2026.

Inactive file

AB 883 (Mathis) Business licenses: U.S. Dept. of Defense SkillBridge program

This bill would require, on and after July 1, 2024, a board to expedite, and authorize a board to assist, in the initial licensure process for an applicant who supplies satisfactory evidence to the board that the applicant is an active duty member of a regular component of the Armed Forces of the United States enrolled in the United States Department of Defense SkillBridge program, as specified, and would provide that regulations to administer those provisions be adopted in accordance with the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 348, Statutes of 2023

AB 1350 (Soria) Veterans memorials

This bill would create the Capitol Park Veterans Memorial Fund. The bill would continuously appropriate the fund to the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing memorials in the State Capitol. The bill would make the department responsible for administering the fund. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to, in consultation with the California Veterans Board, prioritize memorials that do not have formal support from another body for their maintenance, including, but not limited to, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of General Services to collaborate pursuant to a memorandum of agreement to carry out these provisions.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 684, Statutes of 2023

AB 1361 (Hoover) Property taxation: veteran's exemption: preliminary application

This bill would authorize a county assessor to provide written or electronic determination of preliminary eligibility for the disabled veteran's tax exemption. The bill would make related findings and declarations.

This bill would incorporate additional changes to Section 205.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code proposed by SB 82 to be operative only if this bill and SB 82 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 473, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1386 (Gabriel) Veterans housing: tenant referrals

This bill, for purposes of supportive housing units that are restricted to extremely low income veterans pursuant to a regulatory agreement with the committee, would authorize an entity tasked with making referrals of those units targeted to extremely low income households to match prospective secondary tenants with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income that are receiving income as a result of service-connected disability benefits if a qualified tenant is unable to be matched to and accept placement in an available unit within 28 days of the unit becoming available. If a secondary tenant is unable to be matched to and accept placement in an available

unit within 14 days, the bill would authorize the entity to match a veteran experiencing homelessness with an income at or below 60% of the area median income, regardless of the source of the income, in an available unit. The bill would require a qualified unit that is leased to a secondary tenant or other veteran experiencing homelessness pursuant to these provisions to be redesignated to an area median income level commensurate with the income level of the tenant and would require the tenant to pay rent commensurate with their household income's percentage of the area median income. The bill, 12 months after a secondary tenant or other tenant who is a veteran experiencing homelessness has been placed, would require the next available comparable unit to be rented to a qualified tenant at 30% of the median income. The bill would require a qualified entity tasked with making referrals to these units to make a good faith effort to match a tenant with an extremely low income, document these good faith efforts, and make this documentation available to the housing sponsor and, upon request, to the departments.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 760, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1462 (Jim Patterson)

Veteran overdose death

This bill would require the State Department of Public Health to access data within the electronic death registration system to compile a report on veteran drug overdose deaths in California and require the department to annually provide that report to the Legislature and the Department of Veteran Affairs on or before March 15 each year. The bill would require the report to include a cross-tabulation of the specified data and compare it to the data from the previous year. The bill would also require the California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard to reflect overdose deaths by veterans.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 844, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1566 (Soria/Cervantes)

Dept. of Veterans Affairs: veterans' services

This bill would require the department's annual report to include the composition of staff at the county office, as specified, and the annual funding of the county veterans service office by the county, as specified. This bill would authorize the department to require county veterans service officers to apply uniform measurement and workload units, claims, and other information.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 694, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1605 (Gallagher)

High schools: military services: U.S. Space Force

This bill would additionally prohibit each county office of education and charter school offering instruction in any of grades 9 to 12, inclusive that provides on-campus access to employers, from prohibiting access to the military services. The bill would expressly include the United States Space Force in that definition.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 142, Statutes of 2023.

AB 1647 (Soria) **Veterans treatment courts, grants program**

This bill, until January 1, 2029, would require that, on appropriation by the Legislature, the Judicial Council operate a grant program to establish and support veteran's treatment courts or the equivalent services in counties where veteran's treatment courts would be inefficient or impracticable. The bill would require the Judicial Council to establish standards and procedures for the operation of veteran's courts, and condition the award of grant funds on adherence to those standards and procedures. The bill would require veteran's treatment courts that receive grant funds to report information to the Judicial Council, as specified. The bill would also require the Judicial Council to report information to the Legislature, as specified.

Held in Public Safety Committee

AB 1665 (Soria) **Veterans' homes**

This bill would specify that dissolution of marriage or termination of domestic partnership does not necessitate the discharge of the spouse or domestic partner. The bill would provide that the discharge of a veteran member who intends to take an aid-in-dying drug, as specified, does not necessitate the discharge of the spouse or domestic partner.

Inactive File

AB 1745 (Soria) **Public postsecondary ed: veterans: waiver of mandatory tuition & fees**

This bill would instead require that the annual income of the child not exceed the state poverty level, as defined. The bill would also make nonsubstantive changes to provisions relating to this waiver of mandatory systemwide tuition and fees. To the extent these provisions would add additional duties on community college districts, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program. The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement. This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 695, Statutes of 2023.

Oversight and Informational Hearing

Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee

Informational Hearing

April 10, 2023

Subject: County Veteran Service Officers – Overview and Update

Agenda

- 1) Introductory Remarks by Chair and Committee Members
- 2) PANEL 1 – County Veteran Service Officers Overview & Return on Investment
Role of CVSO, Funding, Utilization Rate, Relationship with CalVet, Mental Health

Rhonda Murphy, CACVSO President, CVSO, Santa Barbara County

Keith Boylan, Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services Division, CalVet

Scott Holwell, CACVSO Legislative Chair, CVSO, Kings County

- 3) PANEL 2 – CVSO Workload and Evolving Demographics
County/Office demographics, Veteran population, Homelessness, Outreach challenges.

James Zenner, CVSO, Los Angeles County

Rochelle Arnold, CVSO, Sacramento County

David West, CVSO, Nevada County

- 4) PANEL 3 – Veterans Voices
Veteran Testimony

- 5) PUBLIC COMMENT

Takeaways from the hearing include:

- Funding – the state should provide 50% but only provides 25%. The majority is county funding and about 11% federal funding. In addition, not all CVSOs receive the subvention funds (loosely calculated as money per claim filed x veteran population) rather, they receive the budget determined by County Supervisors. With more funding CVSOs will have more opportunity to outreach and provide services to veterans.
- Mental Health – CalVet draws down and distributes to counties about \$1.7 million per year of Prop 63 MHSA funds. Some county mental health agencies collaborate to help veterans more than others. There is a need for a more well-rounded approach as well as an effective continuum of care.
- PACT Act- The Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022, is meant to improve healthcare access and funding for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service. With this comes two things:
 - Increased workload for CVSOs, and
 - Predatory claims agents and pension poaching
- Majority of CVSO offices do not maintain enough staff to service their veteran population. For example, Sacramento has one rep per 20,000 veterans, and the office is currently unable to take walk-ins and operating on appointments only.
- Success in Nevada County combating veterans homelessness.
- Success in Sacramento County with EDD event for veterans.
- Success in Los Angeles County with their Veterans Peer Access Network, Veterans Suicide Review Team, and aging veterans services.

For the third and final panel of the day we took veteran testimony. One Vietnam veteran spoke of his experience and echoed the need for more state and county funding. An Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran spoke of his lack of support dealing with the federal VA, and of predatory claims agents who offer to help for a fee. He has an appointment with a CVSO later this month.

The Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs staff plans to stay in touch with each presenter and group to ensure every California veteran has access to benefits they rightfully earned during service to our nation.

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