



California Association of County Veterans Service Officers

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CACVSO State Legislative Priorities 2013/2014

1. Support efforts to educate the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the public on the importance and value of the County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO). The eventual goal is to fully fund CVSOs by appropriating the full \$11 million in local assistance funding as reflected in Military and Veterans Code Section 972.1(d).

California is home to approximately two million veterans. Currently, the state budget allocates \$2.6 million to the County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) in 56 California counties. As a result of this chronic underfunding by the state, CVSOs are understaffed and many are or have faced cutbacks and staff reductions. In spite of this CVSOs, who are the first contact for many veterans in all 58 counties, were able to bring in \$100 of federal veterans benefits for every \$1 spent by the state. Without this funding, California's veterans will not get the government benefits for which they earned through their service in the military.

2. Introduce legislation that would direct the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to modify the current California Driver License to indicate that the holder of that license is a veteran.

There are many benefits that are offered to veterans. The majority of veterans in California do not have readily available documents to identify themselves as veterans. Carrying a copy of military discharge papers is impractical and invites identity theft. A drivers license or DMV Identification Card is something most people carry and could be easily modified to indicate veteran status. Veteran status could be verified by the local CVSO. By requiring the veteran to go to the CVSO, office staff could verify veteran status and discuss additional benefits the veteran may be eligible for.

CACVSO Federal Legislative Priorities 2013/2014

1. Support legislation that would provide increased access for County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) to VA information systems for use in developing and monitoring claims submitted on behalf of veterans.

County Veterans Service Offices (CVSOs) are local government agencies responsible for assisting veterans and their dependents and survivors in obtaining benefits to which they may be entitled. As such CVSOs need maximum possible access to VA client and claims databases. Enhancing this access will result in better, timelier, services to claimants and reduce the workload in VA call centers.

2. Support legislative, regulatory or policy changes that would create a federal/state/local government partnership to reduce the VA veteran's claims backlog and expand outreach services to veterans.

VA has expressed the belief that one important way to reduce the unacceptable claims backlog is the initial submission of as complete as is possible claims packages. Individual claimants are unfamiliar with the requirements of the VA claims system. It is, therefore necessary to have competent, trained intermediaries, such as County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO), participate in the preparation and submission of claims. Many CVSOs do not have the resources to do the community outreach that would enable them to reach the maximum possible number of benefit claimants. Federal/state/local partnerships will enable State and County veterans service programs to reach and assist more claimants thus helping to reduce the chronic VA claims backlog.

3. Support legislation that would authorize VA pharmacies to honor prescriptions written by non-VA physicians.

Currently, the VA medical system will only provide prescription medication to eligible veterans if the prescription is written by a VA physician. This requires that veterans make medical appointments with VA physicians for the sole purpose of getting authorization for a medication already prescribed by the veteran's non-VA provider. This process places an unnecessary burden on the VA medical system by requiring its providers to duplicate work that has already been done in the private sector. Waiting times for appointments for this purpose can also result in adverse consequences when the medication is prescribed for an urgent or emergent medical need. This would especially help our more rural veterans.

4. Support legislation that would eliminate the Means Test for veterans to qualify for VA medical care.

The VA currently uses Means Tests (income limits) as one of the factors in determining a veteran's eligibility for VA medical care. These income limitations have excluded some veterans, who would otherwise qualify for enrollment, from obtaining their primary healthcare through the VA. In light of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, we believe all veterans have earned the right and should be able to enroll and obtain their healthcare through the VA if they so choose.

CACVSO State Legislative Platform 2013/2014

California Veterans Homes

1. Support legislation to update the M&V Code concerning all aspects related to CA veterans homes to insure that all veterans in all homes are treated equally. CA has gone from one veterans home (Yountville, est. 1884) to the 8 current veterans homes. The M&V Code has not been updated to establish uniform procedures.
2. Support legislation to provide educational assistance to nursing students who commit to serve a specified number of years in California Veterans' Homes.

Other State Veterans Issues

1. Support legislation that would fund the creation of Veteran Identification cards. The cards would be issued at County Veterans Service Offices to be used by veterans as proof of honorable military service. The veteran would also receive information on and assistance with any benefits issues.
2. Support legislation that would allow courts to defer judgment, until the completion of treatment, in cases where veterans are receiving treatment under Penal Code 1170.9.
3. Support legislation that would recreate a Veteran Special Interest license plate that would specifically identify the owner as a veteran.
4. Support legislation that would permit the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to collect data on veterans and to give that data to the Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA).
5. Support legislation that would create a Governor's Memorial Certificate similar to the Presidential Memorial Certification. Include information directing survivors to the CVSOs.
6. Support legislation that would provide state income tax relief to retirement pay of military retirees.
7. Support legislation that would exempt certain Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises from specific state licensing or certification fees.
8. Support legislation that would make it a criminal offense to intentionally misdirect or mislead a veteran, or anyone acting on the veterans behalf, concerning benefits or entitlements.
9. Support legislation that would expand current law to allow local jurisdictions the option of waiving building and inspection permit fees for veterans with service-connected disabilities, in order to assist them in making ADA-type modifications to their homes.

10. Support the legislative priorities of the state Veterans Service Organizations that are in-line with our own legislative priorities.

11. Support legislation that would require state agencies to coordinate with CDVA to improve state services provided to veterans.

CACVSO Federal Legislative Platform 2013/2014

1. Support legislation that would provide for local assistance funding from the federal level to County Veterans Service Offices.

2. Support legislation that would provide for payment of Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) for all military retirees regardless of the percentage of their service connected disabilities.

3. Support legislation that would eliminate Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) - Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset.

4. Support legislation that would re-instate the Burial/Plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans.

5. Support legislation, regulatory or policy changes which expand/ increase VA responsibility to educate veterans on their entitlements.

6. Support legislation that would grant Presumptive Service Connection for Hepatitis C, "blast injuries", and acoustic trauma for service in a combat zone.

7. Support legislation that would provide for increasing the amounts paid under Improved Death Pension to be equal to the amounts paid under Improved Disability Pension.

8. Support legislation that would provide for a pro-rata additional allowance for dependents for all levels of compensation.

9. Support legislation that would include "Blue Water Navy" veterans into the set of veterans with presumed exposure to Agent Orange.

10. Support legislation that would authorize states with Departments of Veterans Affairs that are accredited with the Veterans Administration to cross-accredit County Veteran Service Officers with another state's accreditation.

11. Support legislation that would eliminate the requirement for war-time service as an eligibility requirement for non-service connected and death pension.