

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS JANUARY 2022 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Prepared by Seth Reeb

Reeb Government Relations

Key Issues 2022

We must keep a close watch on the State budget. CVSO's will receive the total funding amount of \$11 million, that Legislature and the Governor approved in the 2021-22 budget. Reeb Government relations will continue to follow the budget as it moves through the Legislature.

January and February are hectic times for our firm and the Legislature. This time of year is when 2-year and new legislation must begin being acted on.

- California driver's license fee removal. ([SB 837 Umberg](#))
- Military retirement pay tax exemption. ([AB 1623 Ramos](#))
- Veterans cemetery Orange County. ([SB 43 Umberg](#))([AB 1595 Quirk-Silva](#))

Important dates

Jan. 3 —Legislature reconvenes

Jan. 10 —Budget must be submitted by Governor

Feb. 18 —Last day for bills to be introduced

Apr. 7 —Spring Recess begins upon adjournment

Apr. 18 —Legislature reconvenes from Spring Recess

COVID Restrictions

Reeb Government Relations is still dealing with the effects of COVID at the state capitol. We have continued to meet via zoom, email, and conference calls.

How to Connect with your State Legislators

By Seth Reeb, Legislative Advocate

Grassroots lobbying at the state level and how anyone can participate

As your lobbyists, our job is to advocate on the Department's behalf on matters of interest to veterans and service members at the state level. Here at our office near the State Capitol in Sacramento, we regularly interface with legislators and their staff to articulate the support or concerns of veterans, active duty, Reserves and the National Guard on legislation, regulations, and other public policy matters. We operate under the direction of the Chair of the Department's Legislative Committee or Commission.

Many non-profit organizations engage a lobbyist to be their eyes and ears at the Capitol and to advance their legislative agenda to help veterans. Most Veteran non-profits do not have the deep pockets (like large businesses or labor unions) to support political action committees, political contributions, and multiple teams of lobbyists, attorneys, and regulatory specialists. However, some of this disadvantage can be offset by “grassroots” advocacy, which is where political power can be gained by a show of broad public support. We have all seen the campaign materials that show candidates for office posing with veterans or touting what they have done or will do for veterans. This means these candidates value the support of veterans because they sense that veterans are important to the average voter.

Therefore, in addition to the work we do in Sacramento on your behalf, our efforts can be greatly enhanced by veterans getting to know the legislators who represent the district they live in. Legislators want to know the veterans in their districts. They want to hear about what is important to you as veterans. There are already many veterans who are on a first-name basis with their State Assemblymembers and Senators. When a big veterans issue comes up for a vote, they don’t need to make a cold call at the last minute; they can contact that legislator or their staff and let them know what they think. Some probably have the cell phone number or email of their legislators.

How to meet your legislators

First, you want to find out which legislators represent you where you live. Everyone has one Assemblymember and one Senator. Once you have identified who the legislators are, find out where their local district offices are located. Contact those offices and identify who you are, what group you are with, and what you would like to discuss. You might wish to introduce yourself and offer to brief the legislator on issues that are important to veterans or invite the legislator to your local Post dinner, Stand Down, parade, or other community events (You can not endorse a legislator or Candidate). Or you could brief them about how your local post is being unfairly taxed, the veterans cemetery that needs to be built in your community, veterans treatment courts, base closures, or the good work the service officers do. Or you could just educate them on all the great things the veterans and your Veterans Organization is doing for the community. Bring a unified voice from the veterans community to your local officials and create a relationship with their staff. Offer yourself as a resource if the legislator ever needs an opinion on veterans issues. (Many legislators are looking to gain ideas to help the veterans and service members in their district and across the state. It looks really good for them when they get legislation passed to support, protect, and overall improve the quality of life for service members and veterans here in California and those who come here.) GET INVOLVED.

How to find out who your legislator is

Find your Representative:

<http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>

1. Enter your physical address with your nine-digit zip code, and it will list your State Senator and Assemblymember. The nine-digit zip code is necessary because some zip codes have multiple Assemblymembers and Senators.

To find your 9 digit zip code:

1. You will need to get your nine-digit zip code: <https://tools.usps.com/zip-code-lookup.htm?byaddress>
2. Next, go to Vote Smart and enter your nine-digit zip code <https://votesmart.org/search?q=93277#.XWbW1-hKiM9>

Find your Legislator’s District Office and contact info:

Assembly District Office Roster:

<https://www.assembly.ca.gov/assemblymembers>

Senate District Office Roster:

<https://clerk.assembly.ca.gov/sites/clerk.assembly.ca.gov/files/pictures/Senators%20Capitol%20and%20District%20Addresses%202019.pdf>

Things to consider

What are the areas that are impacting veterans in your communities, suicide awareness, school, employment, transportation, access to health care, disabled veterans, locating benefits, the transition from military to civilian, daycare, housing? There are many areas that impact veterans, active duty, and reserve military. As grassroots advocates, we all need to be engaged to give our close-knit community a strong voice.

Consider the saying “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” meaning to us that if you don’t make noise then no one will hear you. All Veterans should aim to be more in touch with the elected officials. We need to have a far bigger voice.

Legislation

There are several ways to stay involved with current legislation, there are ways to watch live hearings and free websites (listed below) to see public information related to bills. Then take your support or concerns to your local leaders.

New Laws

Are you creating a relationship with and asking your local officials to help improve the veterans community. Are you tracking what laws are being enacted? Are you educating the veterans around you and within this organization. Every year new laws are proposed and sometimes passed. These new laws will affect veterans from young to old across the board. We need to help educate our friends, families and the veteran community. It is imperative that we continue to support one another by spreading good and bad news.

As an advocate for veterans, I will be brutally honest in telling you that it is frustrating to see the turnout of support in hearings or lack thereof in reference to veterans and sometimes legislators. Sometimes there are hearings and very few legislators or even community engagement.

One way that we can all be more engaged with each other is using Social Media to share good or bad legislation and encourage everyone to make a call or send a letter. Use social media ie., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube (Cal Channel). Your local elected officials most likely have one of these accounts and you can follow them and see what they are doing for you and our community.

Links to information relating to legislation (audio/ video/text):

I am sharing the following information for two reasons.

1. I want to make you are all aware of the information related to the work that Reeb Government Relations does here at the State Capitol.
2. I strongly believe in the public being informed as to what laws are being passed here in California. I would like to encourage everyone to check out the videos and see your legislators in action. (Senate, Assembly Floor sessions and Committee on Veterans Affairs).

I am including links to where you can watch legislators in action in the last few weeks of the legislative session for 2109. Also, I will include links to where you can see how your legislators have voted on specific bills.

- Watch live hearings:
 1. Senate: <https://www.senate.ca.gov/calendar>
 2. Assembly: <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/todaysevents>
- Watch Video on demand:
 1. Senate: <https://www.senate.ca.gov/media-archive>
 2. Assembly: <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/media-archive>

- Bill info, votes, Committee Analysis: <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billSearchClient.xhtml>
 - For example, you can type in SB 663, where you will be able to see specific information about the current form of the bill. In the right-hand corner, you will see (version tab), and you can see if and how the bill has been amended (changed) through the year if you would like that detailed information. You can also see how legislators have voted on specific bills, by viewing the (votes tab).