



# CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS

## LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2022

### ABOUT COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) are county employees whose job it is to assist veterans, servicemembers, and their families within the county to obtain their earned federal veterans' benefits. The services they provide are 100% free to veterans and their families. While CVSOs' main mission is to assist the county's veterans in obtaining their earned benefits from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), they also connect veterans to other state and county benefits.

In FY 2020-21, California's CVSOs assisted veterans to obtain about \$402 million in VA claims, which are paid directly to the veteran, usually for the rest of their life. VA healthcare is also a key benefit for veterans. VA benefits are unique to each veteran's service and are therefore complex to qualify for, hence the need for the assistance of a trained CVSO and their equally trained Veterans Service Representatives (VSR).

Thanks to the \$5.4 million Local Assistance funding increase from the state budget provided by the legislature and Governor in 2021, the CVSOs are eager to increase "boots on the ground" by hiring new Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) who can help process claims and provide outreach to underserved populations of veterans. In addition to ensuring CVSOs have appropriate funding for their vital services, the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) also advocates for state policies and programs which will benefit California's veterans and their families, as well as active-duty servicemembers, reservists, and National Guard personnel. The CACVSO also works closely with veterans service organizations to sponsor and support legislation in support of this goal.

For more information about CACVSO go to: <http://www.cacvso.org/annual-report/>

### CACVSO STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

#### Homelessness

In early 2020, the CACVSO realigned its priorities to focus on getting homeless veterans off the street and into housing, including transitional and permanent supportive housing. The key to assisting homeless veterans is outreach and building trust among a population which usually eschews contact with social workers, including CVSOs. The pandemic severely, if not

completely, curtailed CVSOs' abilities to engage with the homeless. Once the spread of the virus is brought under control, CVSOs hope to resume working with CalVet to record and track all homeless contact, outreach activities, and successful entry into a housing environment.

### **Accreditation**

Support legislation that would require an individual who is assisting a veteran with filing a claim for benefits to notify that veteran if they are not a VA-accredited representative, and make it a criminal offense to intentionally misdirect or mislead a veteran, or anyone acting on a veteran's behalf, concerning benefits or entitlements for their own monetary gain.

### **Veterans license plate fee waiver**

Support legislation that would grant the license plate fee waiver to all veterans rated at 100 percent disability or through individual unemployability. Change the language on the DMV form to eliminate the requirement that the veteran have a single disability rated at 100%. Also, separate the disabled placard and make it an option for veterans with a mobility impairment.

### **Restore veterans-only license plate**

Support legislation that would restore the veterans-only specialized license plate, making two veteran plates available for sale "Veteran" and "Honoring Veterans."

### **Jobs**

Support legislation that would streamline and/or provide affordability to veterans seeking occupations after their military service. In addition to veterans receiving their earned VA benefits and procuring housing, obtaining a job in an occupation which provides stability and self-reliance is of the utmost importance to financial and mental well-being.

### **Other Legislative Priorities**

- Support the legislative priorities of the state veterans service organizations that are in line with our own legislative priorities.
- Support legislation that would promote state income tax exemption on military retirement pay for military retirees.
- Support legislation that would reform the current system of property tax relief for disabled veterans by raising the current state dollar limitation on property tax relief for disabled veterans.
- Support legislation that would promote the awarding of state grants through CalVet to veterans service organizations and veterans service providers that provide claims assistance and outreach to California veterans.
- Support legislation that would require that California Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises (DVBEs) hire more disabled and non-disabled veterans. Currently, there is no requirement for DVBEs to hire veterans.
- Support legislation to remove the \$5 DMV fee for obtaining the "VETERAN" designation on the California driver's license.

- Support legislation that would continue to encourage expansion of veterans' treatment courts to more counties by providing state funding of veterans' treatment courts in California.
- Support legislation that would reduce property tax assessment on veterans service organizations' posts and chapters.
- Support legislation that would expand laws to prevent dishonest vendors and businesses that prey on or scam veterans and active-duty military personnel by criminalizing their activities.
- Support legislation that would create a Governor's Memorial Certificate similar to the Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC).
- Include information directing survivors to the CVSOs. (PMC is a signed certificate by the President to the family of deceased veterans.)

## **CACVSO FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

### **Backlogs**

Support legislative, regulatory or policy changes that would create a federal/state/local government partnership to reduce the United States Department of Veterans Administration (USDVA) veterans claims backlog and expand outreach services to veterans.

### **USDVA prescription medications**

Support legislation that would authorize USDVA pharmacies to honor prescriptions written by non-USDVA physicians. Currently, the USDVA medical system will only provide prescription medication to eligible veterans if the prescription is written by a USDVA physician.

### **Eliminating means test**

Support legislation that would eliminate the Means Test for veterans to qualify for USDVA medical care. These income limitations have excluded some veterans who would otherwise qualify for enrollment from obtaining their primary healthcare through the USDVA.