

California Association of County Veterans Service Officers

2027 Legislative Priorities

Jim Zenner, Legislative Chair – September 25, 2026

County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs) help California's approximately 1.4 million veterans connect with the benefits and care they have earned. CACVSO asks the Legislature and the Administration to fund CVSOs at a level that matches the need, and to give counties the tools to help prevent veteran suicide, homelessness, and incarceration.

1. Create a separate military workload unit and increase collaboration with CalVet and CalGuard

Create a separate workload unit (WLU) for CVSO work with active and reserve component service members and their families. This work is not credited today, which penalizes counties with large military populations. A dedicated WLU would fund outreach before and during transition, consistent with NACVSO's federal call for continuity of support. CACVSO also asks the state to explore a formal partnership among CalVet, CalGuard, and CACVSO to increase support for National Guard members.

2. Veteran suicide fatality reviews without next-of-kin consent

Partner with CAVSA on legislation letting county review teams access a deceased veteran's personal information without next-of-kin permission, strictly for suicide fatality review. Consent rules are stalling this work: in LA County only 13% of next of kin respond, yielding just 18 completed reviews in three years. Include strict confidentiality and use limits to protect families and privacy.

3. Veteran behavioral health set-aside, granted through CVSOs

Create a dedicated state set-aside for veteran behavioral health, administered by CVSOs as grants to community providers. CVSOs can direct funds to peer support, counseling, and outreach for veterans the VA does not reach.

4. Extend VSSR and CVHI funding

Extend state funding for VSSR and the California Veterans Health Initiative (CVHI) and make it ongoing. These state-administered programs complement CVSO work, and losing the funding would end proven services and the Governor's Challenge work they support.

5. Expand CVSO capacity and standards

Fund more accredited CVSO staff and set statewide standards for training, accreditation, and performance. Adopt VetPro 2.0 and a statewide work queue so CVSOs can share caseloads, track claims, and coordinate across county lines. Ensure any federal CVSO Act funding supplements, not supplants, state subvention and county funding.

6. Expand support for at-risk veterans

Support legislation and budget items that connect veterans to housing, veterans treatment courts, reentry services, and suicide prevention. CVSOs should be funded partners in each, because a benefits claim is often the first step toward stable income, housing, and care.

7. Federal priorities, in support of NACVSO

We support fully implementing and funding Section 302 of the Elizabeth Dole Act (the CVSO Act); stronger accreditation standards and penalties for unaccredited claims consultants; codifying the governmental VSO (GVSO) role in federal systems and the National Veterans Strategy; and opposing any means test for VA disability compensation. We also support NACVSO's claims-process asks: completing the Section 4 report under the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2024 as a roadmap for VA and local partnership; amending toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) rules so a confirmed TERA does not trigger unnecessary exams when service connection is otherwise clear; and restoring the Fully Developed Claim process to cut exams and speed decisions. CACVSO also supports any effort to include GVSO staff in the federal transition assistance program.

Contact: Jim Zenner, Legislative Chair, California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) legislative@cacvso.org