

California VFW Legislative Report–6/1/09

William Manes, State Legislative/PAC Chairman

Following up on the previous report, this is the status of bills in the State Senate:

The following Senate bills have already been passed by that house:

SB 469 Northern California Veterans Cemetery: fees. (Sam Aanestad, Grass Valley)

Existing law authorizes honorably discharged veterans and their spouses and children to be interred at the Northern California Veterans Cemetery, and requires a fee of \$500 to be charged for each spouse or child interred at the cemetery.

This bill would authorize the fee for the interment of the spouses and children of honorably discharged veterans to be waived if the cemetery administrator determines that the families do not have sufficient means to pay for the costs of interment, and would require any costs for these interments to be paid from nonstate funds.

SB 644 Civil Service Examinations: veterans' preference. (Jeff Denham, Merced)

Existing law provides that disabled veterans who become eligible for certification from eligible lists by attaining the passing mark established for an entrance examination held on an open, nonpromotional basis are allowed 10 additional points. Other veterans are allowed 5 additional points.

This bill would instead provide that disabled veterans shall be allowed 15 additional points and other veterans shall be allowed 10 additional points.

The following Senate bills were "held under submission" by the Committee on Appropriations and, therefore, are now dead:

SB 15 Student financial aid: members and former members of the Armed Forces. (Gil Cedillo, Los Angeles. Coauthors, Senate: Mark DeSaulnier, Antioch; Dean Florez, Shafter; and Patricia Wiggins, Santa Rosa. Coauthors, Assembly: Joan Buchanan, San Ramon; Wesley Chesbro, Eureka; Joe Coto, San Jose; Mike Eng, Monterey Park; Cathleen Galgiani, Tracy; Ed Hernandez, Baldwin Park; Paul Krekorian, Burbank; William Monning, Santa Cruz; Brian Nestande, Palm Desert; Roger Niello, Sacramento; Anthony Portantino, Pasadena; Curren Price, Inglewood; Ira Ruskin, Redwood City; Mary Salas, Chula Vista; and Jim Silva, Huntington Beach.)

Would provide some guaranteed financial aid, under the Cal-Grant Program, for servicemembers and veterans who are attending a university or college in California, who would meet the eligibility requirements regarding graduation from high school, and personal and family income limits.

It is interesting to look at the long list of sponsors of the bill and still to have it failed to pass the Appropriations Committee. The administrative costs of the bill were estimated at \$175,000 in the first year. Grant costs were set at \$1.9 million for every 1,000 eligible recipients, up to a total of over \$7 million annual costs in about four years. It was also clear that the committee analysts considered that the Federal Post 9/11 GI Bill provided adequate benefits. However, very few members of the California National Guard can qualify for the GI Bill.

SB 595 Homeless Veterans Housing and Supportive Services Act of 2010. (Gil Cedillo, Los Angeles. Coauthors, Senate: Lou Correa, Santa Ana; Dean Florez, Shafter; Patricia Wiggins, Santa Rosa. Coauthor, Assembly: Wilmer Carter, Rialto.)

Would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$1.5 million which would be used to finance supportive housing projects for homeless veterans, or veterans at risk of homelessness, with incomes below limits determined by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

SB 611 Student Financial aid: Cal Grant A Entitlement Awards: veterans. (Lou Correa, Santa Ana)

Existing law requires that students who receive the CalGrant education awards use the funds only for

tuition or student fees, or both.

This bill would authorize a student whose tuition or fees, or both, are paid in full by the Post 9/11 GI Bill to use the CalGrant award funds for living expenses and expenses for transportation, supplies and books.

SB 646 Student financial aid: veterans and dependents. (Jeff Denham, (Merced).

Would prohibit campuses of the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges from charging any mandatory system fees to California members of the armed services who were honorably discharged and have no more remaining months of GI Bill eligibility.