

LEGISLATIVE ALERT AB 1422
Bill Manes, Chairman

As I reported in my last legislative report, the State Budget that was finally passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor included a reduction of \$34 million from the Budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs compared to the last fiscal year. Most significantly, over \$12 million was cut from the expenditures which were scheduled in the coming year for the development of the Veterans Homes in Fresno and Redding. This would delay the opening of these two homes at least until 2013.

The VFW Department of California has been leading the effort among the state veteran organizations to find some way to mitigate this action. Assemblyman Henry Perea (Fresno) has agreed to be the author of a bill that might help the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) to find budget savings that could be used for this purpose. In the current budget year, some \$11 million in approved budgeted funds for the Department were withheld by the Department of Finance and applied to the state-wide Budget deficit problem. Additional funds that were saved last year by CDVA, and which the Department tried to apply to veterans services, were also withheld by Finance for the Budget deficit. Perea's bill, AB 1422, would require that any savings in operating funds for the State veterans homes would specifically be applied to expedite the staffing and opening of the two homes now being constructed in Fresno and Redding. Although the concern at this time involves specifically these two State Veterans Homes, the issues are related to the budgeting of veterans services and programs in the entire state.

The assistance of the Districts, and their Posts, is requested to bring these issues to the attention of the Legislature. If the requested process is followed, the word will also be carried to the Office of the Governor.

For the first two letters attached to this Alert, it is requested that Districts and Posts send Letter 1 to Assemblyman Perea. If we can get a large number of support letters to him, he can use this response in his efforts to get the leadership of the Legislature to permit this bill to come to a vote. It is also requested that Posts have their individual members send Letter 2 to the Members of the Senate and the Assembly. It is important that these letters be "constituent" communications. The target would be to have each Post send at least a dozen such letters to get the attention of these elected officials.

The Legislature is currently in recess until August 15. To be effective, these letters must be in the offices of the Members of the State Legislature when they return on that date.