

PRESS RELEASE

Governor Brown Creates California Interagency Council on Veterans

SACRAMENTO – Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. today issued an Executive Order establishing the California Interagency Council on Veterans to improve how veterans’ services are coordinated across local, state and federal government.

“The California Interagency Council on Veterans gives everyone a seat at the table and ensures we’re working collaboratively to address the needs of the 30,000 servicemen and women who return to California each year,” Brown said. “We owe our veterans the best and when they come home, we must serve them the same way they so bravely served us.”

Governor Brown’s Executive Order directs the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs to establish the Council, which will be tasked with identifying and prioritizing the needs of California’s veterans and coordinating the activities at all levels of government in addressing those needs.

“With so many combat veterans returning to California every year it is imperative that state agencies and departments coordinate our efforts to ensure these young men and women are connected to the services and benefits they need to successfully transition home,” said California Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Peter J. Gravett.

This order is based on AB 557, authored by Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez with Assemblymembers Paul Cook, Richard Pan, and Henry T. Perea.

“I’m very pleased the Governor has created the Interagency Council on Veterans Affairs because one of our most important duties is to keep faith with the men and women who have served the United States in uniform,” said Speaker Pérez. “I introduced legislation to create the Council early this session because we need to do more with less, and by creating this Council, we will bring new focus and new efficiency to provide needed services to California’s veterans. I’m very pleased the Governor has taken the proactive step of creating this Council by Executive Order so that it can begin its vital work immediately.”

Under the order, Speaker Pérez and Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg are each expected to appoint a member to the Council from their respective houses. These appointees will join Secretaries and department heads of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California Volunteers, Business Transportation and Housing Agency, Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Military Department, Employment Development Department, Department of Consumer Affairs, Department of Rehabilitation and Department of Housing and Community Development.

Additionally, the Governor’s order requests that the Chief Justice of California, President of the University of California, Chancellor of California State University and Chancellor of California Community Colleges each appoint a member to the Council. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs will also coordinate with Federal partners and external stakeholders to ensure both groups are active participants on the Council.

California's veterans face many challenges as they transition back to civilian life, including:

- The unemployment rate for Gulf War II veterans is 42 percent higher than it is for non-veterans.
- Approximately 25 percent of Gulf War II veterans have a disability that is connected to their military service, compared with approximately 13 percent of all veterans.
- Recent tests of returning troops show that 20 percent of infantry and 10 percent of other troops suffer from at least mild brain injury.
- Over 35 percent of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, who have sought healthcare through the Veterans Administration, have been diagnosed with mental disorders.
- California has the largest number of homeless veterans in the nation and 62 percent of all homeless veterans have been diagnosed with both substance abuse issues and serious mental health problems.

The text of the Executive Order is below:

EXECUTIVE ORDER B-9-11

WHEREAS more than 30,000 veterans return to California each year after leaving the United States Armed Services; and

WHEREAS many of these veterans face hardships while transitioning back into civilian life; and

WHEREAS the unemployment rate for Gulf War II veterans is 42 percent higher than it is for non-veterans; and

WHEREAS approximately 25 percent of Gulf War II veterans have a disability that is connected to their military service, compared with approximately 13 percent of all veterans; and

WHEREAS recent tests of returning troops show that 20 percent of infantry and 10 percent of other troops suffer from at least mild brain injury; and

WHEREAS over 35 percent of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, who have sought healthcare through the Veterans Administration, have been diagnosed with mental disorders; and

WHEREAS California has the largest number of homeless veterans in the nation; and

WHEREAS 62 percent of all homeless veterans have been diagnosed with both substance abuse issues and serious mental health problems; and

WHEREAS many federal, state, and local agencies, and non-governmental organizations receive and distribute funding targeted to address veteran needs from a variety of sources; and

WHEREAS California veterans can be better served with a more coordinated statewide effort.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the State of California, issue this Order to become effective immediately:

IT IS ORDERED that the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs establish the California Interagency Council on Veterans, whose purpose shall be to identify and prioritize the needs of

California's veterans, and to coordinate the activities at all levels of government in addressing those needs.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Secretaries of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, California Volunteers, the Business Transportation and Housing Agency, the Health and Human Services Agency, and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Adjutant General of the Military Department, and the Directors of the Employment Development Department, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the Department of Housing and Community Development are appointed as members of the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that each of those Secretaries and Directors designate a member of their management staff as their Ombudsman for Veterans' Affairs who shall be that agency's primary point of contact for veteran issues.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs invite federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, U. S. Department of Labor, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the military services, and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Unit to participate in the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs invite veteran stakeholders, such as the California Veterans Board, the California Association of County Veteran Service Officers, the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies, the California Commanders Council, the Employment Training Panel, the California Workforce Investment Board, and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities to nominate a representative to participate in the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Secretaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Labor and Workforce Development Agency provide staff support to the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS REQUESTED that the President pro Tem of the California Senate and Speaker of the California Assembly each appoint a member from their respective houses to represent the legislative branch as members of the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS FURTHER REQUESTED that the Chief Justice of California appoint a representative from the judicial branch as a member of California Interagency Council on Veterans.

IT IS FURTHER REQUESTED that the President, University of California, the Chancellor, California State University, and Chancellor California Community Colleges each appoint a representative from their respective systems to sit as members of the California Interagency Council on Veterans.

This Order is not intended to create, and does not create, any rights or benefits, whether substantive or procedural, or enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California or its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

I FURTHER DIRECT that, as soon as hereafter possible, this Order shall be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given to this Order.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 23rd day of August 2011.