

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

Bill Manes

September 27, 2011

The Governor has issued an Executive Order to establish the California Interagency Council on Veterans, with the purpose of improving the coordination of veterans services across local, state and federal government. The Council had been proposed by legislation, AB 557 authored by Assembly Speaker John Perez, with Assemblymembers Paul Cook (Yucaipa), Richard Pan (Sacramento), and Henry Perea (Fresno). The bill had been passed by the Assembly but was held in the Senate, apparently in anticipation of the Governor's action. The Council will be very large with representation from various Departments of the State Government, and the Legislature. The Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, the President of the University of California, Chancellors of the California State University and the California Community Colleges are also supposed to appoint representatives. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs is to coordinate with Federal agencies and stakeholders to ensure that they are also active participants. There is no indication at this time when this Council will actually be active.

The following is the most recent status of bills related to veterans' issues which were still in process when the State Legislature adjourned on September 9.

AB 188 Property tax exemption: principal residence: veterans and their unmarried surviving spouses (Marty Block, San Diego; Betsy Butler, El Segundo)

Would provide that a property that is the principal residence of an unmarried surviving spouse of a disabled veteran, if not for his or her confinement to a hospital or other care facility, would receive the disabled veterans' property tax exemption. The bill would correct an unintentional omission in the current law.

Bill has been passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

AB 387 Pupils: excused absences: military deployment activities (Susan Bonilla, Concord)
Would include spending time with an immediate family member, who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support position, as another type of excused absence.

The bill has passed the Legislature and is waiting for action by the Governor.

AB 629 Veterans Cemetery (William Monning, Monterey)

This bill would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement with the Fort Ord Reuse Authority for the veterans cemetery project to be under the sole charge and direct control of the authority.

The bill has been passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

AB 697 Veterans benefits: Veterans' Farm and Home Purchase Act of 1943 (V. Manuel Perez, Indio. Coauthors: Marty Block, Lemon Grove; Bob Blumenfield, Van Nuys; Wes Chesbro, Santa Rosa; Roger Dickinson, Sacramento; Paul Cook, Yucaipa; Jared Huffman, San Rafael; Kevin Jeffries, Murrieta; Bonnie Lowenthal, Long Beach; William Monning, Santa Cruz; Jim Nielsen, Redding; and Das Williams, Santa Barbara)

Existing law prohibits the department from refinancing a loan on a home in which the veteran has an interest of record. This bill would authorize the department to refinance a loan, as long as it was not a loan under the Cal-Vet Farm and Home Loan Program.

The bill has passed the Legislature and is awaiting action by the Governor.

AB 882 Veterans and military: public post-secondary education. (Paul Cook, Yucaipa, and Robert Blumenfield, Van Nuys.)

As amended, requires that the California State University, and requests that the University of California, conform to federal standards to provide that members of the Armed Forces, and their dependents, would be entitled to resident status as long as they were continuously enrolled in a university.

The bill passed the Legislature and is ready to go to the Governor.

AB 905 Disposition of remains: authorized agent (Richard Pan, Sacramento. Coauthor: Paul Cook, Yucaipa.)

Seeks to formally recognize in state law the U.S. Defense Department (DD) Form 93, Record of Emergency Data, as an acceptable written instrument of a military service member's designation of a person to direct the disposition of his or her remains (PADD) in the event of death.

This bill is basically the same as AB 2190 in the 2009-2010 Session of the State Legislature which was passed by the Assembly but was never given a committee hearing in the Senate. As amended, would delay the bill taking effect until the DD Form 93 is amended to permit designation of a person who is not related to the service member as PADD, which would permit the designation of a "life partner" for example. The modification of the form may require legislative action by the Congress.

Passed by the Assembly and the Senate. Enrolled and sent to the Governor.

The bill is sponsored by the VFW, Department of California.

SB 10 Military and veterans: Veterans' Homes Allied Council. (Noreen Evans, Santa Rosa)

Permits the Veterans Home Allied Council for each of the State Veterans Homes to represent veterans who reside in the homes in matters before the Legislature. The representation must be approved by a majority vote of the voting members of the council and the council may not engage in any campaign or endorse any public candidates in the course of that representation.

The bill has been passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor. (Similar bills in past years have been vetoed.)

SB 813 Public postsecondary education: veterans' enrollment. (Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Lou Correa, Santa Ana, Chairman)

Would grant priority enrollment to members or former members of the Armed Forces within four years of leaving active duty.

The bill has passed the Legislature and is waiting for action by the Governor.

For those bill which are still waiting for the Governor's action, he has until October 9 to either sign or veto.