

California VFW Legislative Report–2-14-2010
William Manes, State Legislative/PAC Chairman

Updates on bills with previous committee actions:

AB 498 Vehicles: special interest license plates and decals (Mary Hayashi, Hayward)

Would permit a veteran who is eligible to have the ex-POW license plate, which does not cost the usual state registration fees, to instead use the veterans organization special license plate and still be exempt from paying the fees.

The bill is sponsored by the VFW and is scheduled for its first committee hearings during the coming week.

The bill has been passed by the Assembly and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Housing.

District Commanders, who have Post that are located in the Senate Districts of the members on this Committee, have been requested to help generate constituent letters of support for this bill. There could be attempts to generate opposition in the Senate because the bill could require administrative changes by the DMV, and it is expected to apply to only a relatively few veterans.

AB 1088 Taxpayer contributions: California Veterans Fund (Nathan Fletcher, San Diego)

Would restore the donations which were previously authorized on the income tax check off list for the Veterans Quality of Life Fund, to help support the welfare and recreation activities at the California Veterans Homes.

This bill has also been passed by the Assembly. Its next step is expected to be the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs which would be expected to pass it. However, the bill will also have to go to the Senate Committee on Revenue and Taxation which could be a difficult hurdle.

New bills which have recently been introduced:

AB 1644 Veterans remains. (Jim Nielsen, Biggs)

Would allow specified entities in possession of the cremated remains of a veteran to release the remains to a veterans' service organization, if specified conditions are met. Would require the veterans' service organization to take all reasonable steps to inter remains received and would exempt the organization from storage charges or additional charges of interment.

Referred to Assembly Committees on Veterans Affairs and Judiciary.

AB 1703 State Nursing Assumption Program of Loans for Education: veterans homes. (Stephen Knight, Lancaster)

Would expand the program by which the State assumes part of the repayment of student loans for students in an education program for registered nurses when the student agrees to work, following graduation, in a state facility such as a veterans home – or a state prison or psychiatric hospital. If the student completes 5 or more years of employment at a veterans home, the state would assume repayment of the entire student loan.

AB 1787 Veterans cemetery. (William Monning, Santa Cruz)

Current law establishes an Endowment Fund to receive donations for the start up of a state veterans cemetery at the site of the former Fort Ord Army Base in Monterey County.

This bill would now direct the California Department of Veterans Affairs to design, develop and construct the California Central Coast State Veterans Cemetery at this site.

AB 1829 Military decorations: fraud. (Paul Cook, Yucaipa. Coauthors, Assembly: Joel Anderson, La

Mesa; Tom Berryhill, Modesto; Wesley Chesbro, Eureka; Chuck DeVore, Irvine; Bill Emmerson, Redlands; Nathan Fletcher, San Diego; Danny Gilmore, Hanford; Kevin Jeffries, Riverside; Ted Lieu, Torrance; Brian Nestande, Palm Desert; Roger Niello, Sacramento; Anthony Portantino, Pasadena; Jim Silva, Huntington Beach; Cameron Smyth, Santa Clarita; and Audra Strickland, Camarillo. Coauthors, Senate: Lou Correa, Santa Ana; and Mark DeSaulnier, Antioch.)

Provides that any person who, orally, in writing, or by wearing any military decoration, falsely represents himself or herself to have been awarded any military decoration, as specified, with the intent to defraud, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

AB 282 by Assemblymember Cook, adopted in October 2007, originally provided for the same penalty, but that bill was amended during committee hearings to make the offense merely an infraction. This bill is another attempt to make the offense a more serious affair.

Late news:

Senator Jeff Denham, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, is expected to announce the introduction of a new bill which would require that Veterans Day be observed on the actual date on which the holiday falls (as opposed to a Monday or Friday). Actually, there is currently such a law in the Education Code but some of the State universities have not been observing it. Also, last November, the State Legislature moved the observance of the holiday from Wednesday to Monday to permit the members to take a 3-day weekend.

VFW Legislative Day at the Capitol.

This important event is scheduled on April 20, starting at 9:00 am, at the Sutter Club in Sacramento. Please help spread the word to your Posts and encourage attendance. This is a time when we want to show our State Legislators that the VFW follows their actions and that we support bills which are important to veterans.

Complete information on all state legislation involving veterans issues is available at the website:

<http://www.califveterans.com>