

STATE VETERANS LEGISLATION ISSUES 2018

AB-1873 Driver's licenses: veteran designation. (Jay Obernolte, Hesperia)

DESCRIPTION: Existing law allows an in-person applicant for a driver's license or identification card to request the word "VETERAN" be printed on the face of the driver's license or identification card. Commencing July 1, 2019, existing law prohibits a fee from being charged for that request if made by (1) a person who has been determined to have a current income level that meets the eligibility requirements for specified assistance programs, or (2) a person who can verify his or her status as a homeless person, in accordance with specified provisions.

This bill would additionally prohibit the fee from being charged for a veteran designation request when made by a person 62 years of age or older.

STATUS: Referred to Assembly Committees on Transportation and Veterans Affairs. The first hearing scheduled on April 10 was cancelled by the author.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American G.I Forum of California

American Legion-Department of California

AMVETS-Department of California

California Association of County Veterans Service Officers

California State Commanders Veterans Council

Military Officers Association of America-The California Council of Chapters.

Riverside Sheriff's Association

Opposition

None on file

AB-2254 Property tax: exemption. (Tom Lackey, Palmdale. Co-authors, Assembly: Heath Flora, Stockton; and Devon Mathis, San Diego. Co-author, Senate: Pat Bates, Laguna Hills.)

DESCRIPTION: Existing property tax law, pursuant to the authorization of the California Constitution, provides a disabled veteran's property tax exemption for the principal place of residence of a veteran, the veteran's spouse, or the veteran and veteran's spouse jointly, and the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran, as provided, if the veteran, is blind in both eyes, has lost the use of 2 or more limbs, or is totally disabled as a result of injury or disease incurred in military, or if the veteran has, as a result of a service-connected injury or disease, died while on active duty in military service. Existing law exempts that part of the full value of the residence that does not exceed \$100,000, or \$150,000, if the household income of the veteran or the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran does not exceed \$40,000, adjusted for inflation, as specified.

This bill, beginning with the 2019-20 fiscal year and for each fiscal year thereafter, would instead exempt the full value of the principal place of residence of a veteran or veteran's spouse and the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran.

(See also AB 3209)

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, the bill would result in annual local property tax revenue loss of \$91.1 million starting in 2019-20, resulting in General Fund (GF) costs of approximately \$45 million as a result of the Proposition 98 guarantee.

STATUS: Passed by Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation and referred to Committee on Appropriations. Currently held under suspension.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

National Veterans Foundation

Opposition

None on file

AB-2590 Personal income taxes: exclusion: servicemembers. (Phillip Chen, Brea)

DESCRIPTION: The Personal Income Tax Law excludes certain items of income from the computation of tax, including an exclusion for compensation for military or naval service performed by a nonresident while domiciled within the state.

This bill would exclude from gross income, basic pay received by a servicemember on active duty in the United States Armed Forces, in the reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or in the National Guard, derived from his or her position as a servicemember while he or she is on military orders for 90 or more consecutive days.

STATUS: Passed by the Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation, and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

AB-3128 Personal income tax: credit: disabled veteran: service dog. (Phillip Chen, Brea)

DESCRIPTION: This bill, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2019, and before January 1, 2022, would allow a credit under the Personal Income Tax Law in an amount equal to 50% of the amounts paid or incurred during the taxable year by a qualified disabled veteran for the ownership and maintenance of a service dog, not to exceed \$1,500 for a taxable year.

STATUS: Passed by the Assembly Committee on Revenue and Taxation, and referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

SB-1043 Department of Veterans Affairs: veterans services. (Josh Newman, Brea)

DESCRIPTION: This bill would define, for the County Veteran Service offices, a workload unit for purposes of these provisions to mean a specific claim activity that is used to allocate subvention funds to counties, which is approved by the department, and performed by county veterans service officers.

The bill would also appropriate on an annual basis the sum of \$7,000,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Veterans Affairs to be available for allocation to counties to fund the activities of county veterans service officers, as specified.

(Currently, the annual budget for the California Department of Veterans Affairs provides \$5.6 million for this subvention funding to counties.)

STATUS: Referred to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs with a hearing scheduled on April 24.

SB-1357 Vehicle license plates: veterans. (Josh Newman, Brea)

DESCRIPTION: Existing law requires DMV to issue special license plates under a special interest license plate program, and authorizes any person who is the registered owner or lessee of a vehicle to apply for a special interest license plate that has a distinctive design or decal that honors all veterans or veterans who served in a particular war or armed conflict.

Existing law also provides that special interest license plates are subject to fees for issuance, renewal, or personalization that are additional to those required for nonspecialized license plates, and requires that the additional fee revenue generated from veterans license plates, less DMV's administrative costs, be deposited in the Veterans Service Office (VSO) Fund. Money in the VSO Fund is to be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to the Department of Veterans Affairs for allocation and disbursement to counties for the operation of county veterans service offices (CVSOs).

This bill:

- 1) Requires CalVet to adopt, and the Department of Motor Vehicles to implement, two descriptive messages as part of the distinctive design for specialized plates for veterans, which would consist of "Honoring Veterans" and "Veteran."
- 2) Limits issuance of the "Veteran" message only to an applicant who provides documentation as having performed one of the following:
 - a) Honorable service in the Armed Forces of the United States;
 - b) A minimum of 180 days of honorable service in the California National Guard.
- 3) The bill would require the departments to establish a process for determining that eligibility.

BACKGROUND: Prior to 2010, the DMV offered a specialty license plate only for veterans with the word "Veteran" printed on it. AB 1908 (Cook, 2010) transitioned the old veterans license plate to a new "Honoring Veterans" license plate. The change was made to broaden the pool of eligible buyers and boost revenues. The "Honoring Veterans" plate can be purchased by any member of the public, who wishes to support veterans.

The change had the unintended effect of denying veterans a license plate, which specifically identifies them as veterans. Veterans and veterans organizations have been asking for reestablishment of a veterans-only plate since AB 1908 went into

effect. In response to these concerns, the Legislature enacted AB 244 (Bonilla, 2013), which:

1. Directs CalVet to apply to DMV to sponsor a veterans specialized license plate program, and DMV shall issue license plates for that program if CalVet meets the requirements prescribed in statute for all specialized plate applicants.
2. Specifies that the design of the veterans specialized license plate shall be identical to the design of the veterans special interest license plate issued on or prior to January 1, 2010.

According to the bill's sponsors, CalVet was unable to receive the threshold amount of 7,500 names.

STATUS: Passed by Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs and referred to Committee on Transportation and Housing.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Sponsor: California Association of County Veterans Service Officers

Support:

American G.I. Forum of California

American Legion – Department of California

AMVETS – Department of California

California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO)

California State Commanders Veterans Council

Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters (MOAA)

Oppose: None received.