

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 50

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 150

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 50—Relative to veterans.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 3, 2002.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 50, Dickerson. Veterans benefits.

This measure would request the President and the Congress of the United States to enact legislation to establish a federal/state partnership to use local county veterans service officers to assist the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating the veterans claims processing backlog.

WHEREAS, The United States presently has a population of over 25 million veterans from its previous wars. The majority of that veteran population is from World War II and the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, The World War II and Korean War veteran population is presently over 70 years of age, and that group is passing away at the rate of 1,000 veterans per day; and

WHEREAS, The United States government has acknowledged its responsibility to provide medical care or compensation for medical problems, as well as other benefits, to those veterans who served their country in time of war; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Veterans Affairs is charged with administering the federal benefits program for veterans; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran passes away with a claim pending against the Department of Veterans Affairs, the claim essentially ends with the veteran's passing regardless of how long the claim had been pending; and

WHEREAS, Dying while waiting is unacceptable for American veterans; and

WHEREAS, There presently exists a backlog of over 601,000 claims submitted by veterans. This backlog has persisted for several years, with some claims outstanding for one year or more; and

WHEREAS, A significant portion of these claims involve World War II and Korean War veterans, and despite determined efforts by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to eliminate this backlog, the backlog continues; and



WHEREAS, There exists a trained group of individuals known as county veterans service officers located in 37 of the 50 states, representing 700 counties and a workforce of over 2,400 full-time local government employees; and

WHEREAS, These county veterans service officers were established in 1945 after World War II for the purpose of helping returning veterans reenter civilian life, and have continued to do so for all veterans of all wars since then; and

WHEREAS, These county veterans service officers are highly trained individuals who have continued to provide assistance to all veterans for over 50 years and are already familiar with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs claims policies and procedures; and

WHEREAS, For example, in California, county veterans service officers annually assist California's veterans obtain monetary benefits in excess of \$150 million by assisting these veterans in filing over 50,000 claims annually with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, This claims processing backlog needs to be urgently reduced while our World War II and Korean War veterans are still with us; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Veterans Affairs could enter into a partnership with state and local governments to utilize these highly trained county veterans service officers to eliminate the present claims processing backlog, by expanding the county veterans service officers' role; and

WHEREAS, This would be a cost-effective way of reducing the claims processing backlog by eliminating the need for a substantial increase in federal employees; and

WHEREAS, These county veterans service officers, as represented by the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, have offered to assist the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in exchange for block grants to the various states based upon each state's veteran population to compensate county veterans service officers for their expanded role; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California urges the Congress of the United States and the President to support and enact legislation that would establish a federal/state partnership to use the knowledge and skills of the local county veterans service officers to assist the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating the veterans claims processing backlog in order that America's veterans can take advantage



of the benefits that the United States has authorized for them for their faithful and loyal service to a grateful nation; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

