

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY AUGUST 22, 2005

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2005—06 REGULAR SESSION

**Assembly Joint Resolution**

**No. 25**

**Introduced by Assembly Member Baca**

*(Coauthors: Assembly Members Aghazarian, Arambula, Bass, Benoit, Berg, Bermudez, Blakeslee, Bogh, Calderon, Canciamilla, Chan, Chavez, Chu, Cogdill, Cohn, Coto, Daucher, De La Torre, DeVore, Dymally, Emmerson, Frommer, Garcia, Goldberg, Hancock, Jerome Horton, Shirley Horton, Houston, Huff, Jones, Karnette, Keene, Koretz, La Malfa, La Suer, Laird, Leno, Leslie, Levine, Lieber, Liu, Matthews, Maze, Montanez, Mountjoy, Mullin, Nakanishi, Nation, Nava, Negrete McLeod, Nunez, Oropeza, Parra, Pavley, Plescia, Richman, Sharon Runner, Ruskin, Saldana, Salinas, Spitzer, Strickland, Tran, Umberg, Vargas, Villines, Wolk, Wyland, and Yee)*

June 14, 2005

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Assembly Joint Resolution No. 25—Relative to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 25, as amended, Baca. 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.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, The United States presently has a population of  
2 over 25 million veterans from its previous wars. The majority of

1 that veteran population is from World War II, the Korean War,  
2 and the Vietnam War; and

3 WHEREAS, The United States shall have a new generation of  
4 veterans as a result of the War on Terror and the conflicts in  
5 Afghanistan and Iraq; and

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

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

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

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

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

22 WHEREAS, There presently exists a backlog of over 500,000  
23 claims submitted by veterans. This backlog has persisted for  
24 several years, with some claims outstanding for one year or  
25 more; and

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

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

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

38 WHEREAS, These county veterans service officers are highly  
39 trained individuals who have continued to provide assistance to  
40 all veterans for over 50 years and are already familiar with the

1 United States Department of Veterans Affairs claims policies and  
2 procedures; and

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

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

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

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

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

28 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*  
29 *California, jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California  
30 urges the Congress of the United States and the President to  
31 support and enact legislation such as HR 616 that would establish  
32 a federal-state partnership to use the knowledge and skills of the  
33 local county veterans service officers to assist the United States  
34 Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating the veterans  
35 claims processing backlog in order that America's veterans can  
36 take advantage of the benefits that the United States has  
37 authorized for them for their faithful and loyal service to a  
38 grateful nation; and be it further

39 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit  
40 copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of

1 the United States, to the Speaker of the House of  
2 Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to  
3 each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress  
4 of the United States.

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