

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 882**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Cook**

February 17, 2011

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An act to add Section 64.5 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 882, as introduced, Cook. Department of Veterans Affairs: consolidation of services to veterans.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs within state government and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to, administration of veterans benefits programs. Existing law establishes the California Veterans Board within the department and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to, its power to determine operational policy for the department.

This bill would establish the California Veterans Services and Workforce Development Division within the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans assistance programs in the state, and would require the division to perform various functions and duties relating to the coordination and administration of veterans assistance programs, as specified. The bill would require the administrative and support staff responsible for the administration of the specified programs to be transferred from the Employment Development Department to the division, and would require the costs of the transfer to utilize existing resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares the  
2 following:

3 (a) California has the largest veteran population in the nation,  
4 comprised of an estimated 2 million veterans. Each month,  
5 thousands of military personnel are released from active service  
6 and face tremendous challenges transitioning back into civilian  
7 life.

8 (b) The challenges military veterans face are compounded by  
9 a complex system of veteran assistance programs that is difficult  
10 to navigate.

11 (c) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs expended  
12 approximately \$6 billion in California in the 2005 federal fiscal  
13 year. Of that amount, \$2.66 billion dollars was in disability  
14 payments (compensation and benefits) to veterans. The states that  
15 have the largest veteran populations in the nation are California,  
16 Florida, and Texas. Texas veterans have collected 44 percent more  
17 disability benefits than the amount collected by California veterans.

18 (d) Increasing disability benefit participation in California in  
19 an amount that would approach the national average could generate  
20 an additional \$330 million in annual payments to California  
21 veterans.

22 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this act to  
23 consolidate the veterans assistance programs and their dedicated  
24 staff as identified in Section 64.5 of the Military and Veterans  
25 Code, as added by this act, within the California Veterans Services  
26 and Workforce Development Division of the Department of  
27 Veterans Affairs.

28 SEC. 2. Section 64.5 is added to the Military and Veterans  
29 Code, to read:

30 64.5. (a) The California Veterans Services and Workforce  
31 Development Division is hereby established within the department  
32 for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans  
33 assistance programs in the state. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
34 shall have authority over the division.

35 (b) The division shall do all of the following:

36 (1) Coordinate with other state agencies that provide benefits  
37 and assistance to veterans to ensure that information about veterans

1 assistance programs and benefits is made available to all state  
2 agencies that serve veterans in the state.

3 (2) Administer the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and  
4 the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), and oversee  
5 the duties of Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER)  
6 as prescribed under the federal Jobs for Veterans State Grants  
7 program, in cooperation with the Employment Development  
8 Department (EDD). The division shall work with staff from the  
9 EDD to develop a plan whereby responsibility for the  
10 administration of TAP, DVOP, and LVER shall be transferred  
11 from the EDD to the division. The development of the plan shall  
12 be completed on or before April 1, 2012.

13 (3) Ensure that other state agencies and officials that are  
14 involved in the implementation and administration of veterans  
15 services programs are informed when any changes in existing  
16 programs are required, or new programs are established that  
17 provide assistance and benefits to veterans, and require that those  
18 agencies and officials report to the division when those changes  
19 occur or new programs are established.

20 (4) Coordinate with staff from other state agencies, including,  
21 but not limited to, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency,  
22 the Employment Training Panel, the California Workforce  
23 Investment Board, the State Department of Mental Health, the  
24 Department of General Services, the State Department of Alcohol  
25 and Drug Programs, and representatives of the University of  
26 California, the California State University, and the California  
27 community colleges with regard to the provision of veterans  
28 services and benefits.

29 (c) (1) In complying with this section, all administrative and  
30 support staff responsible for the administration of the DVOP, TAP,  
31 and LVER shall be transferred from the EDD to the division.

32 (2) Any costs associated with the implementation of these  
33 transfers shall utilize existing resources of the Department of  
34 Veterans Affairs, as the operational cost of these programs utilizes  
35 funding from the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program, as  
36 prescribed within the United States Department of Labor.