

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 11, 2012

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 10, 2012

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2198

**Introduced by Assembly Member Nielsen
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Atkins)**

February 23, 2012

An act to amend Sections 972.1 and 974 of the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2198, as amended, Nielsen. Department of Veterans Affairs: reporting requirements.

Existing law requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to disburse funds, appropriated to the department for the purpose of supporting county veterans service officers pursuant to the annual Budget Act, on a pro rata basis, to counties that comply with certain conditions. Existing law requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to annually determine the amount of new or increased monetary benefits paid to eligible veterans by the federal government attributable to the assistance of county veterans service officers, and requires the department to prepare and transmit its determination for the preceding fiscal year to the Department of Finance and the Legislature on or before January 1 of each year.

This bill would extend the January 1 date specified above to ~~March~~ *October* 1.

Existing law requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to annually prepare a report of the activities of county veterans service officers, as

specified, and may require each county veterans service officer to submit information required to prepare the report.

This bill would revise the reporting requirements of the Department of Veterans Affairs to include the number of veterans and their family members who have contacted or utilized the services of the county veterans service offices during the fiscal year, the number of claims filed to achieve benefits on behalf of veterans and their dependents, the annualized monetary value of benefits received, and a summary of services provided and special events and activities in which county veterans service offices participated, as specified.

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 finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) It is the intent of the Legislature to increase awareness and
4 accessibility to benefits that our state veterans have earned through
5 service to our nation.

6 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to increase the amount of
7 federal benefits that California’s veterans receive.

8 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature to be provided as complete
9 a picture as possible of the many ways that county veterans service
10 offices provide services to California’s veterans.

11 (d) Therefore, it is necessary for county veterans service offices
12 to provide data in addition to that now being provided to the
13 Department of Veterans Affairs.

14 SEC. 2. Section 972.1 of the Military and Veterans Code, as
15 amended by Section 1 of Chapter 183 of the Statutes of 2009, is
16 amended to read:

17 972.1. (a) The sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)
18 is hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the Department
19 of Veterans Affairs for allocation, during the 1989–90 fiscal year,
20 for purposes of funding the activities of county ~~veteran~~ *veterans*
21 service officers pursuant to this section. Funds for allocation in
22 future years shall be as provided in the annual Budget Act.

23 (b) Funds shall be disbursed each fiscal year on a pro rata basis
24 to counties that have established and maintain a county ~~veteran~~
25 *veterans* service officer in accordance with the staffing level and

1 workload of each county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service officer under a
2 formula based upon performance that shall be developed by the
3 Department of Veterans Affairs for these purposes.

4 (c) The department shall annually determine the amount of new
5 or increased monetary benefits paid to eligible veterans by the
6 federal government attributable to the assistance of county ~~veteran~~
7 *veterans* service officers. The department shall, on or before ~~March~~
8 ~~±~~ *October 1* of each year, prepare and transmit its determination
9 for the preceding fiscal year to the Department of Finance and the
10 Legislature. The Department of Finance shall review the
11 department's determination in time to use the information in the
12 annual Budget Act for the budget of the department for the next
13 fiscal year.

14 (d) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that 50 percent of
15 the amount annually budgeted for county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
16 officers is approximately eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000).
17 The Legislature further finds and declares that it is an efficient and
18 reasonable use of state funds to increase the annual budget for
19 county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service officers in an amount not to exceed
20 eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000) if it is justified by the
21 monetary benefits to the state's veterans attributable to the effort
22 of these officers.

23 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature, after reviewing the
24 department's determination in subdivision (c), to consider an
25 increase in the annual budget for county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
26 officers in an amount not to exceed five million dollars
27 (\$5,000,000), if the monetary benefits to the state's veterans
28 attributable to the assistance of county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
29 officers justify that increase in the budget.

30 (e) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2016,
31 and as of that date is repealed.

32 SEC. 3. Section 972.1 of the Military and Veterans Code, as
33 amended by Section 2 of Chapter 183 of the Statutes of 2009, is
34 amended to read:

35 972.1. (a) The sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)
36 is hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the Department
37 of Veterans Affairs for allocation, during the 1989-90 fiscal year,
38 for purposes of funding the activities of county ~~veteran~~ *veterans*
39 service officers pursuant to this section. Funds for allocation in
40 future years shall be as provided in the annual Budget Act.

1 (b) Funds shall be disbursed each fiscal year on a pro rata basis
 2 to counties that have established and maintain a county ~~veteran~~
 3 *veterans* service officer in accordance with the staffing level and
 4 workload of each county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service officer under a
 5 formula based upon performance that shall be developed by the
 6 Department of Veterans Affairs for these purposes, and that shall
 7 allocate county funds in any fiscal year for county ~~veteran~~ *veterans*
 8 service officers in an amount not less than the amount allocated
 9 in the 1988–89 fiscal year.

10 (c) The department shall annually determine the amount of new
 11 or increased monetary benefits paid to eligible veterans by the
 12 federal government attributable to the assistance of county ~~veteran~~
 13 *veterans* service officers. The department shall, on or before ~~March~~
 14 ~~±~~ *October 1* of each year, prepare and transmit its determination
 15 for the preceding fiscal year to the Department of Finance and the
 16 Legislature. The Department of Finance shall review the
 17 department’s determination in time to use the information in the
 18 annual Budget Act for the budget of the department for the next
 19 fiscal year.

20 (d) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that 50 percent of
 21 the amount annually budgeted for county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
 22 officers is approximately eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000).
 23 The Legislature further finds and declares that it is an efficient and
 24 reasonable use of state funds to increase the annual budget for
 25 county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service officers in an amount not to exceed
 26 eleven million dollars (\$11,000,000) if it is justified by the
 27 monetary benefits to the state’s veterans attributable to the effort
 28 of these officers.

29 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature, after reviewing the
 30 department’s determination in subdivision (c), to consider an
 31 increase in the annual budget for county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
 32 officers in an amount not to exceed five million dollars
 33 (\$5,000,000), if the monetary benefits to the state’s veterans
 34 attributable to the assistance of county veteran service officers
 35 justify that increase in the budget.

36 (e) This section shall become operative January 1, 2016.

37 SEC. 4. Section 974 of the Military and Veterans Code is
 38 amended to read:

39 974. (a) The Department of Veterans Affairs shall annually
 40 prepare a report of the activities of county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service

1 officers, and may require each county ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service
2 officer to submit information required to prepare the report. The
3 report shall include the following:

4 (1) The number of veterans and their family members who have
5 contacted or utilized the services of the county veterans service
6 offices during the fiscal year.

7 (2) The number of claims filed to achieve benefits such as
8 pension, disability compensation, and healthcare on behalf of
9 veterans and their dependents.

10 (3) The annualized monetary value of benefits received by
11 veterans and their dependents as a result of the efforts of county
12 veterans service ~~office~~ *offices*, broken down by type of benefit.

13 (4) A summary of other services provided by county veterans
14 service offices and special events and activities in which county
15 ~~veteran~~ *veterans* service offices participated, such as veterans
16 outreach events, homeless veteran “Stand Downs,” and job fairs
17 for veterans.

18 (b) The information required to be included in paragraphs (1)
19 to (3), inclusive, of subdivision (a) shall be set forth for each county
20 together with a statewide total.

21 (c) The department shall transmit a copy of the report to the
22 Department of Finance, the State Department of Health Care
23 Services, the California Veterans Board, and to each Member of
24 the Legislature.