

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2263

Introduced by Assembly Member Bradford

February 21, 2014

An act to add Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) to Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 to the Penal Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2263, as introduced, Bradford. Veterans service officers: correctional facilities.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is responsible for administering various programs and services for the benefit of veterans. Existing law also authorizes each county board of supervisors to appoint a county veterans service officer to perform specified veterans-related services, including assisting veterans in pursuing claims for federal or state veterans' benefits.

This bill would require a parole agent to be appointed as a veterans service officer at each facility that is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The veterans service officer would be responsible for assisting inmates who are veterans in pursuing claims for veterans' benefits, as specified. The bill would require the veterans service officer to coordinate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and county veterans service officers, 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. It is the intent of the Legislature to help inmates
2 who have served in the military to access federal and state veterans'
3 benefits earned from military service so that those inmates are
4 better equipped to successfully reintegrate into the community,
5 thereby reducing costs to the state.

6 SEC. 2. Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) is added
7 to Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 of the Penal Code, to read:

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9 Article 7. Veterans Service Officers

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11 2696. At each facility that is under the jurisdiction of the
12 Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, there shall be a
13 parole agent who is appointed as a veterans service officer. For
14 purposes of this article, "veterans service officer" means the parole
15 agent appointed pursuant to this section.

16 2696.1. The veterans service officer is responsible for assisting
17 inmates who are veterans in pursuing claims for federal veterans'
18 benefits, or in establishing rights to any other privilege, preference,
19 care, or compensation provided under federal or state law because
20 of honorable service in the military. The veterans service officer
21 is authorized to appoint inmates who have served in the military
22 to assist with these responsibilities.

23 2696.2. The veterans service officer shall coordinate with the
24 United States Department of Veterans Affairs in order to provide
25 inmates who are veterans with the most efficient access to earned
26 veterans' benefits.

27 2696.3. The veterans service officer shall coordinate with the
28 Department of Veterans Affairs and the county veterans service
29 officer in the county in which the facility is located for advice,
30 assistance, and training, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the
31 program.