

AMENDED IN SENATE AUGUST 4, 2014

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 23, 2014

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 22, 2014

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2263

Introduced by Assembly Member Bradford
(Coauthor: Senator Mitchell)

February 21, 2014

An act to add Sections 2695.1, 2695.2, 2695.3, 2695.4, and 2695.5 to the Penal Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2263, as amended, Bradford. Veterans service advocate: correctional facilities.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is responsible for administering various programs and services for the benefit of veterans, and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to oversee the state prison system. 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. Under existing law, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is required to develop guidance policies relative to the release of veterans who are inmates with the intent to assist veterans who are inmates in pursuing claims for federal veterans' benefits, or in establishing rights to any other privilege, preference, care, or compensation provided under federal or state law because of honorable service in the military. In developing those policies, the Department of

Corrections and Rehabilitation is authorized to coordinate with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the county veterans service officer or veterans service organizations.

This bill would authorize a veterans service organization to volunteer to serve as a veterans service advocate at each facility that is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The advocate would be ~~responsible for developing~~ *authorized to develop* a veterans economic recidivism prevention plan *for each inmate who is a veteran*. The bill would require, in order to assist with the development and execution of that plan, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to, among other things, provide the advocate with access, subject to restrictions, to inmates who are veterans and to existing resources, as specified, that would assist the advocate in implementing the veterans economic recidivism prevention plan. The bill would require the advocate to coordinate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and county veterans service officers, as specified. The bill would define “advocate” and “veteran” for these purposes, and would include a related statement of legislative intent.

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 *male and*
- 2 *female* inmates who have served in the military to access federal
- 3 and state veterans’ benefits earned from military service so that
- 4 those inmates are better equipped to successfully reintegrate into
- 5 the community, thereby reducing costs to the state.
- 6 SEC. 2. Section 2695.1 is added to the Penal Code, to read:
- 7 2695.1. At each facility that is under the jurisdiction of the
- 8 Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, a veterans service
- 9 organization may volunteer to serve as a veterans service advocate.
- 10 SEC. 3. Section 2695.2 is added to the Penal Code, to read:
- 11 2695.2. (a) The advocate shall be ~~responsible for developing~~
- 12 *authorized to develop* a veterans economic recidivism prevention
- 13 plan ~~within 180 days prior to an~~ *for each inmate who is a veteran*
- 14 *during the 180-day period preceding the inmate’s release date.*

1 (b) The veterans economic recidivism prevention plan *for each*
2 *inmate who is a veteran* shall include, but not be limited to, the
3 following:

4 (1) Facilitating access of ~~each inmate who is a veteran~~ *the inmate*
5 to county veterans service officers, California Department of
6 Veterans Affairs and United States Department of Veterans Affairs
7 officers and personnel, so that the inmate may pursue claims for
8 federal veterans' benefits or any other privilege, preference, care,
9 or compensation provided under federal or state law because of
10 the inmate's service in the military.

11 (2) Developing a plan for how ~~an inmate who is a veteran~~ *the*
12 *inmate* will access earned veterans' benefits that he or she may be
13 eligible for upon the inmate's release.

14 (c) In order to assist with the development and execution of the
15 veterans economic recidivism prevention plan, the Department of
16 Corrections and Rehabilitation shall do both of the following:

17 (1) (A) Facilitate access by the advocate to each inmate who
18 is a veteran.

19 (B) Access by the advocate is subject to those department
20 screening and clearance guidelines and training requirements that
21 are imposed on other visitors and volunteers.

22 (C) Access by the advocate shall be allowed to the extent it does
23 not pose a threat to the security or safety of the facility, or to
24 inmates and staff.

25 (2) Provide the advocate with access to existing resources,
26 including, but not limited to, computer and Internet access, that
27 would assist the advocate in implementing the veterans economic
28 recidivism prevention plan, to the extent it does not pose a threat
29 to the security or safety of the facility, or to inmates and staff.

30 (d) *A copy of the veterans economic recidivism prevention plan*
31 *shall be provided to the inmate prior to the inmate's release.*

32 SEC. 4. Section 2695.3 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

33 2695.3. The advocate shall coordinate with the United States
34 Department of Veterans Affairs in order to provide each inmate
35 who is a veteran with access to earned veterans' benefits.

36 SEC. 5. Section 2695.4 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

37 2695.4. The advocate shall coordinate with the California
38 Department of Veterans Affairs and the county veterans service
39 officer in the county in which the facility is located for advice,

1 assistance, and training, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the
2 veterans economic recidivism prevention plan.

3 SEC. 6. Section 2695.5 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

4 2695.5. For purposes of this article, the following definitions
5 shall apply:

6 (a) "Advocate" means a veterans service organization that is
7 federally certified and has volunteered to serve as a veterans service
8 advocate pursuant to this ~~title~~ *article*.

9 (b) "Veteran" means a person who has been discharged from
10 the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Air
11 Force, United States Marine Corps, United States Coast Guard,
12 the Merchant Marine, or the American Red Cross.