

AMENDED IN SENATE AUGUST 17, 2010

AMENDED IN SENATE JULY 15, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 28, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 20, 2010

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2784

Introduced by Committee on Veterans Affairs (Cook (Chair), Block, Gilmore, Lieu, V. Manuel Pérez, Salas, Saldaña, and Yamada)

March 8, 2010

An act to amend Sections 65, 66, 66.5, and 84 of the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2784, as amended, Committee on Veterans Affairs. ~~Veterans-
California Veterans Board.~~

Existing law provides that the California Veterans Board consists of 7 members appointed by the Governor subject to Senate confirmation. All members of the board are required to be veterans.

This bill would increase the size of the board to 9 members, *and would require at least 2 of the members to be women.*

Existing law requires at least one member of the California Veterans Board to have substantial training or professional expertise in geriatrics, gerontology, or long-term care.

This bill would also require that one member have substantial training or professional expertise in mental health counseling and one member have a degree in health care administration or experience in the financial management of health care facilities. This bill would also state the intent

of the Legislature to encourage the Governor, when making the appointments to the board, to consider a veteran with specific expertise in women veterans’ mental and physical health issues, and would make legislative findings and declarations related to women veterans.

Existing law prohibits the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from effectuating any policy change that would modify any veterans’ program without first fully briefing the board regarding the effects upon veterans of the proposed policy change.

This bill would additionally prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from recommending any policy change that would modify any veterans’ program without first fully briefing the board.

Existing law, for purposes of the above provisions and provisions relating to veterans’ welfare, defines “program” to mean the Veterans’ Home of California, the veterans’ farm and home purchase program, including any associated insurance programs, and the veterans’ education assistance program.

This bill would provide that “program” also refers to any other program or service offered or delivered to veterans by another state agency or department.

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. (a) The Legislature finds and declares that a
- 2 2009 audit of the *Department of Veterans Affairs* conducted by
- 3 the Bureau of State Audits determined all of the following:
- 4 (1) The ~~Department of Veterans Affairs~~ (hereafter ~~department~~)
- 5 *department* needs to improve its strategic planning process to better
- 6 track its progress toward meeting its goals.
- 7 (2) The department did not adequately assess veterans’ needs
- 8 in preparing its strategic plan.
- 9 (3) The department’s strategic plan does not specify how goals
- 10 will be met, lacks adequate measures for assessing progress, and
- 11 does not always specify how the key needs and concerns of the
- 12 veteran community will be addressed.
- 13 (4) The department’s Veterans Services Division’s action plan
- 14 designed to meet the strategic plan’s goals lacks specifics and is
- 15 not effective in measuring progress. Moreover, the action plan
- 16 does not align with the department’s strategic plan.

1 (5) The department has not followed key monitoring procedures
2 suggested by its strategic plan to assess its progress.

3 (b) The Legislature also finds and declares the following:

4 (1) Women veterans are at higher risk than male veterans for
5 developing mental health conditions, especially younger women.

6 (2) Military sexual trauma (MST) is widespread. While serving
7 in the Armed Forces, an estimated 20 to 48 percent of women
8 veterans were sexually assaulted and up to 80 percent experienced
9 sexual harassment.

10 (3) Women veterans with MST are more likely to experience
11 other mental health conditions. Studies indicate that women are
12 twice as likely as men to develop post-traumatic stress disorder
13 (PTSD), and women typically experience more, longer lasting
14 symptoms than their male counterparts. These symptoms are often
15 accompanied by physical problems.

16 (4) Women serving in the Armed Forces are also experiencing
17 an increasing number of traumatic brain injuries as a result of
18 exposure to combat conditions.

19 (5) Depression is a major problem for women veterans, and
20 substance abuse is common among women veterans being treated
21 for depression or PTSD.

22 SEC. 2. Section 65 of the Military and Veterans Code is
23 amended to read:

24 65. The board shall consist of nine members who shall be
25 appointed by the Governor subject to the confirmation of the
26 Senate.

27 SEC. 3. Section 66 of the Military and Veterans Code is
28 amended to read:

29 66. All members of the board shall be veterans as “veteran” is
30 defined in Section 18540.4 of the Government Code. One of these
31 members shall also be retired from the active or reserve forces of
32 the United States military service. One of these members shall also
33 be a resident of a California veterans home. *At least two of the*
34 *members shall be women.* This section shall not be construed to
35 prohibit a member of the board who does not meet these
36 requirements from serving the remainder of his or her term.

37 SEC. 4. Section 66.5 of the Military and Veterans Code is
38 amended to read:

1 66.5. (a) One member of the board shall have substantial
2 training or professional expertise in mortgage lending and real
3 estate finance.

4 (b) One other member of the board shall have substantial training
5 or professional expertise in geriatrics, gerontology, or long-term
6 care.

7 (c) One member of the board shall have an accounting or
8 auditing background, and preferably shall be a certified public
9 accountant.

10 (d) One member of the board shall have substantial training or
11 professional expertise in mental health counseling, preferably in
12 the areas of posttraumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma,
13 or both.

14 (e) One member of the board shall have a degree in health care
15 administration or shall have experience in the financial
16 management of health care facilities.

17 (f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any
18 member of the board from serving the remainder of his or her term.

19 (g) The first vacancy in the membership of the board, that occurs
20 after September 27, ~~2012~~, 2002, and does not require the training
21 or expertise required by subdivision (a) or (b), shall be filled by
22 the appointment of a member who meets the criteria required by
23 subdivision (c).

24 (h) It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage the Governor,
25 when making the appointments to the board, to consider a veteran
26 with specific expertise in women veterans' mental and physical
27 health issues.

28 SEC. 5. Section 84 of the Military and Veterans Code is
29 amended to read:

30 84. (a) The secretary may, whenever he or she deems it
31 advisable, and shall when required so to do by the board, present
32 reports and recommendations to the board concerning any matter
33 relating to veterans' welfare whether or not provided by existing
34 law.

35 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the secretary
36 shall not recommend or effectuate any policy change that would
37 modify any veterans' program without first fully briefing the board
38 regarding the effects upon veterans of the proposed policy change.

39 (c) For the purposes of this section and Section 700, "program"
40 means the Veterans' Home of California, the veterans' farm and

1 home purchase program, including any associated insurance
2 programs, any veterans' education assistance program, and any
3 other program or service offered or delivered to veterans by another
4 state agency or department.

5 (d) "Policy change" for the purposes of this section means any
6 proposed changes to the programs set forth in subdivision (c) that
7 would directly or indirectly affect the eligibility of veterans to
8 participate in, the affordability for veterans of, or the financial
9 stability of, those programs.