

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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May 25, 2010

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg, Senate president Pro Tempore
The Honorable Dennis Hollingsworth, Senate Republican Leader
The Honorable John Perez, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Martin Garrick, Assembly Republican Leader
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support of Operation Welcome Home

Dear Legislative Leaders:

We are strongly in support of Operation Welcome Home: Governor Schwarzenegger's plan to reach out to our new returning Veterans, many who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

California has approximately 30,000 veterans returning annually and Operation Welcome Home is a statewide outreach to connect with our returning veterans to make sure they know about the benefits and transitional workforce training available to them.

We are also in support of the funding increase for county veterans service offices. These are an integral part of the outreach and the assistance in acquiring the benefits for which our veterans are entitled. With so many new veterans returning, these offices need adequate funding to serve our veterans.

California's County Veterans Service Offices are funded primarily through county governments' general funds, with more than 84% of their state-wide operating costs provided by their respective counties. The remaining 15% of funding is provided by the state, which is provided for in the California Military and Veterans Code. The original intent of the CVSO funding mechanism, established by Senate Bill 608 in 1997 (Johannessen, Chapter 318), was for the state to share equally the cost of CVSO funding with the counties. However, the Legislature never appropriated the full \$5 million and to date the state's annual subvention has only been \$2.6 million.

In 2009, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, Senate Bill 419 (Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, Chapter 183) which updated the 1997 legislative findings and declarations by declaring that 50 percent of the state's share to fund county veteran service officers is approximately \$11 million per year.

Despite the challenges of underfunding and understaffing, CVSO's have managed to garner over \$2.7 billion in federal benefits for California veterans since 1995. For every dollar the state spends on subvention per year, CVSO's bring in on average \$100 in new federal monies to California. The expenditure by the state to help fund these offices is more than offset by the federal monies which come into California's economy making this one of the most cost effective uses of state funds.

Because California has more veterans than any other state and with the on-going deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, those numbers are increasing. We need Operation Welcome Home to reach out to our brave men and women who serve for the rest of us. We also need to make sure that our county veterans service offices are funded so that we can assist all California veterans who seek assistance.

Sincerely

Supervisor Ray Nutting, Vice Chair
Board of Supervisors, County of El Dorado

Cc: Honorable Members, California Legislature
Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Pete Conaty & Associates