

Veterans Services – September 2022 Report

1. EDC Veteran Services Updates:

Staffing update: As you all may know, we have recently lost two employees in our office. However, it has not kept us from our mission. We have recently conducted interviews for the General Trainee position, and we hope to have that position filled soon.

Upcoming trainings: The Fall CACVSO training conference is coming up in Oct. from the 16th to the 22nd. We have 1 VSR attending the conference as our representative and to continue their VA knowledge. They will bring back any new information and or changes that are occurring in the VA.

What is keeping the office busy: We have had multiple appointments made by veterans/dependents to inquire about changes to VA benefits due to the PACT Act that was recently signed into law. A lot of our clients have gotten incorrect information and we do our best to clarify everything for them. We have assisted a total of 555 veterans via phone calls, face to face appointments and walk in hours. We have tasked one VSR to look through the current pending claims to ensure all awards are posted and to post completed claims that are not yet posted. The results for the last audit were very good. We only had 1 form to correct that was very minor. It was a statement in support of claim that was just claimed incorrectly. It did not impact the Veterans benefits or our office procedures.

Some of the things that the PACT Act has done: If you served in Thailand during the Vietnam war you no longer must have been on the perimeter fence for the VA to concede exposure to Agent Orange. There are several other locations that were added with specific time frames for each. The PACT Act has also added new presumptive conditions such as Hypertension & MGUS (Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance) for Vietnam veterans. For the current era veterans, it has added a long list of presumptive conditions due to Burn Pit and other toxic exposure. It will aid veterans in getting their VA benefits.

Where we will be in Sept.: We will have a VSR at the Tahoe Veteran Services office on Sept. 13th and 20th; There will be at least one representative at the Placerville Stand Down on 9/30 and 10/1; We are hoping to have at least one representative at the SLT Stand Down as well on 9/17

Claim Updates:

August 2022 Claim Submissions: 261

Including, but not limited to:

48 Claims for Service-Connected Disability

63 Intent to File

47 Appointments of EDC VSO as Representative for Veterans

12 Statements in support of claim

10 Appeals- Supplemental claim or Higher Level Review

5 Applications for VA Healthcare

10 Applications for Pension or Survivor Benefits

16 Veteran Status on Driver's License

25 Cal Vet College Fee Waivers

8 Additions of Dependents to Claim

Total funds awarded to Veterans in August:

Retroactive Pay \$550,994.11

Monthly Payments \$53,294.33

Total Phone Calls: 314

Total Scheduled Appointments: 86

Total Walk-In clients: 155

2. South Lake Tahoe Updates:

- We continue to staff the office in South Lake Tahoe two days per month – the 2nd and 3rd Tuesday
- We average 5 appointments each day with Veterans and or family members applying for services
- Phone calls directly placed to the SLT office are still very low. Most calls come to the Placerville office, where appointments for Tahoe can be scheduled.
- No record of walk-in visitors in SLT looking for Veteran Services. This is being tracked by the front office staff.

3. VA/Cal Vet Updates

The VA offers veterans that lost employment due to the Covid Pandemic a training program to assist them in gaining new employment. **The program is called VRRAP (Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program)** It provides up to 12 months tuition and monthly housing allowance. To qualify the veteran must have lost employment due to the pandemic, be between the age of 22 and 66 years old, able to work and not eligible for any other

education or unemployment benefits. If a veteran qualifies, they should apply asap. They stop accepting applications December 11, 2022 or when the reach the funding limit of \$386 million or participant limit of 17,250, whichever comes first.

To apply simply go to <https://www.va.gov/education/other-va-education-benefits/veteran-rapid-retraining-assistance/apply-for-vrrap-form-22-1990s>

A new bill, SB 837 (Driver's licenses: veteran designation), currently sits on the Governors Desk for either signature, or veto, which would repeal the extra fees that Veterans pay to get "Veteran" status on their Drivers Licenses. The bill reads:

"Existing law requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue a driver's license to an applicant when the department determines that the applicant is lawfully entitled to a license. Existing law allows an in-person applicant for a driver's license or identification card to request the word "VETERAN" be printed on the face of the driver's license or identification card, subject to certain requirements, including, among others, verification of veteran status, as specified, and payment of a \$5 fee, which the department is authorized to increase by regulation, in an amount not to exceed \$15, as specified. Existing law prohibits a fee from being charged for that request if made by a person who has been determined to have a current income level that meets the eligibility requirements for specified assistance programs or a person who can verify their status as a homeless person, in accordance with specified provisions.

This bill would repeal the requirement that an applicant pay the above-described fee."

A letter written to the Governor on behalf of Veteran organizations, requesting he sign the bill into law is attached to this report. Any person or group in support of this issue, that would like to ask that the bill be signed, can go to <https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/> and enter the required information.

4. End of report. Questions?



REEB GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Leg.Unit@gov.ca.gov

Re: SB 837 – Umberg; Signature request; Driver's licenses: veteran designation

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of our clients, the American Legion-Department of California, AMVETS-Department of California, California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, California State Commanders Veterans Council, Military Officers Association of America-California Council of Chapters, and the Vietnam Veterans Association-California State Council, we are writing to request that you sign SB 837-Umberg in to law.

SB 837 will repeal the current \$5 fee charged by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for issuance of a "VETERAN" designation on the driver's license or identification card. Beginning in late 2015, California veterans could apply to the DMV for a "VETERAN" designation on their driver's license. To qualify for this designation, it is required that the veteran visit a County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) to verify their veteran status. This visit also allows the CVSO to ascertain if the veteran is eligible for any federal benefits.

SB 837 builds on the success of AB 935-Frazier from 2014, which created the "VETERAN" designation on the driver's license and ID card. As a result of AB 935, 219,850 veterans visited CVSOs to get the "Veteran" designation on their driver's license between November 2015 and January 1, 2021. During these visits, 85,918 veterans filed claims with the federal VA and more than 35,384 veterans are now receiving annualized VA payments totaling \$202,499,570. This does not include over \$117 million in retroactive payments and \$2.06 million in miscellaneous payments.

Sincerely,


Dana Nichol