

County of Monterey



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May 15, 2023

The Honorable Tri Ta
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 5540
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 684 (Ta) County veteran service officers: additional resources. – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Ta:

The County of Monterey is pleased to support your measure Assembly Bill (AB) 684, which would provide a stipend to counties who maintain a county veterans service officer (CVSO) on each active United States (U.S.) military base in their county. These additional county resources will help our newly separating veterans access their full Federal and California benefits.

The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) reports that claims filed through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with the assistance of a CVSO have a higher rate of approval, demonstrating the value of CVSOs in guiding veterans through a complicated bureaucracy and connecting them to the benefits they deserve. Many veterans are unaware of the role CVSOs play and the resources they provide. In California the CACVSO reports that the state's ratio of veterans to Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) lags behind other states, resulting in a limited supply of VSRs available to service the largest veteran population of any state in the nation. Limited access to VSRs results in an estimated 65,000 veterans missing out on their benefits and roughly \$1.1 billion in VA benefits lost annually.

AB 684 will resolve this disparity and ensure that the tens of thousands of service members discharged from active duty each year in California receive access to an on-base CVSO and the veteran's benefits to which they are entitled. CVSO access expansion will help connect veterans to their well-deserved benefits, which will in turn help offset the high cost of living in California and assist veterans and their families remain in the state.

AB 684 will not only help bring Federal benefits to California, but also ensure the state is upholding its responsibility to its service members and assisting the transition to civilian life. It is for these reasons that the County of Monterey supports AB 684. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Alejo, Chair
Board of Supervisors

Cc: The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)