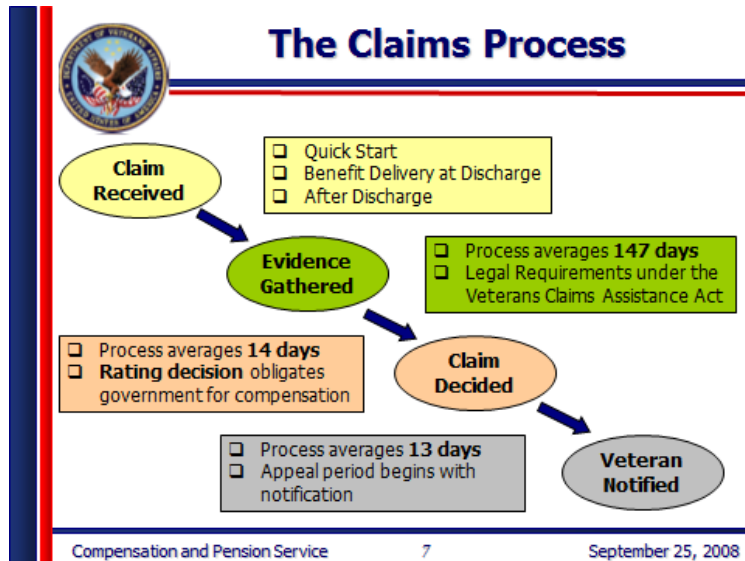


**Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs
BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR:
August 17, 2011 Oversight Hearing**

**John Spangler, Chief Consultant
Lizette Mata, Committee Secretary**

Federal Programs in Veterans Claims Outreach

Compensation & Pension Program Overview



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) offers many different kinds of benefits that are available to veterans and their family members, dependents and survivors. The most widely accessed benefits are disability compensation and pension benefits. These benefits are administered by the USDVA Compensation and Pension Service.

USDVA disability compensation pension is a monthly payment that is available to eligible veterans to

compensate them for a disability that is the result of their military service.

The first step in obtaining USDVA disability compensation is to establish that a current disability is service-connected. This means that the disability had its onset during active military service, or that a disability that existed prior to a veteran's entry into active military service was aggravated during service beyond the natural progression of the underlying disease or condition.

Once service connection has been established, the USDVA will review the most recent medical evidence and evaluate the current level of the severity of the symptoms associated with the disability. The USDVA will then issue a rating (sometimes called a disability "evaluation"), expressed in a percentage of the amount of disability caused by the disease or disorder. This percentage rating determines the amount of monthly compensation paid.

The USDVA also provides disability benefits for veterans who do not have any service-connected disorders. USDVA nonservice-connected (NSC) pension benefits are available to wartime veterans who have limited or no income, and who are age 65 or older, or, if under 65, who are permanently and totally disabled.

NSC pension is income-based, meaning that the veteran's household (rather than individual) income cannot exceed the maximum annual amount set by the USDVA each year. Thus, NSC pension is designed to bring the veteran's total annual household income to the level of the maximum annual amount. There is a dollar-for-dollar offset between the amount of the pension paid and the veteran's household income, including retirement pension and Social Security benefits.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a federal program to assist military personnel,

including National Guard and Reserves, with a smooth transition into a rewarding and successful private sector career but in California it is also being used to connect veterans to other benefits. Successful implementation of California's TAP program has been achieved through strategically locating California Employment Development (EDD) staff on military bases wherever feasible. This was accomplished through cooperation and a subsequent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with on-site Department of Defense (DOD) staff at Navy and Marine Corps Fleet and Family Support Centers, Airman Family Readiness Centers, and Army/Coast Guard Transition Offices. These centers provide office space and logistical support for EDD instructors at eight locations.

At the beginning of each TAP class, the participants are given the California Directory of Veteran Services (DE 6033) and they must complete the Veteran Reintegration Project form located at the back of the Directory. Once completed, the Veteran Reintegration Project form is sent to the California Department of Veterans' Affairs (CALVET), which enters the information from the reintegration forms into their database and makes referrals of the data to other State and Local benefit/service providers. The CALVET presently employs student interns to digitize the information. EDD plans to enable online completion of the reintegration form; it will bring computers to the TAP classes and have the service members enter their information directly, saving time and resources.

If the "Employment" box is checked on the reintegration form, CALVET forwards the form to the EDD One-Stop Career Center closest to the veterans' residence. From there, the EDD (CalVet Corps staff) reaches out to the veteran and provides one-on-one assistance with benefits and services. These services can range from filing for unemployment insurance benefits to referring the Veteran to local workforce development partners and community organizations or case management.

According to EDD, prospective grant funding for the TAP program from the US Department of Labor should remain constant. EDD is aware that there is discussion at the federal level concerning potential privatization of the TAP.

USDVA OUTREACH EFFORTS



The Pre-Discharge Program

A joint USDVA and Department of Defense program that affords service members the opportunity to file claims for disability compensation up to 180 days prior to separation or retirement from active duty or full time National Guard or Reserve duty (Titles 10 and 32).

The VONAPP (Veterans Online Application)

The VONAPP web site is an official USDVA web site that enables service members, veterans and their beneficiaries, and other designated individuals to apply for benefits using the Internet.

Agent Orange Fast Track Claims Process

Agent Orange is the name of a specific blend of herbicides used during the Vietnam era. The military sprayed millions of gallons on trees and vegetation that provided cover for enemy forces. Some Vietnam-era Veterans were exposed to these herbicides. USDVA and many other government departments and agencies have conducted research studies on the possible health effects of Agent Orange exposure on U.S. Veterans.

USDVA has recognized certain cancers and other diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure. Veterans, Veterans' children and survivors may be eligible for compensation benefits for these diseases and health care benefits. Fast Track is an accelerated claims process dedicated to Vietnam Veterans who have been diagnosed with an Agent Orange presumptive condition.

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIM PROGRAM

The Fully Developed Claim (FDC) Program is a new program designed to provide swift and expeditious treatment of eligible "fully developed" compensation or pension claims. The FDC Program is the fastest means of getting a claim processed. A participating Veteran with an eligible claim will have his/her claim expeditiously routed through the claims process for a swift decision.

To participate, the FDC Program requires that a Veteran complete and submit a Fully Developed Claim Certification and either a VA Form 21-526EZ, Fully Developed Claim (Compensation), for a

compensation claim, or a VA Form 21-527EZ, Fully Developed Claim (Pension), for a pension claim. The Veteran must also submit, with the application and certification, all relevant and pertinent evidence to “fully develop” the claim. VA Form 21-526EZ and VA Form 21-527EZ provide, in detail, claims eligible for the FDC program as well as notification of all information and evidence necessary to “fully develop” and substantiate these claims.

USDVA, traditionally, after it receives a claim from a Veteran will only then provide the Veteran notification of what is required from him/her to substantiate the claim via the Duty to Assist letter. The FDC program is unique in that it provides notification of the evidence necessary to substantiate an eligible claim at the time of application, allowing the Veteran to understand what is required of him/her at that time. A Veteran participating in the FDC program will send the required evidence with the claim and certify that he/she has nothing further to provide. By doing this a Veteran dramatically reduces the processing time of his/her claim by eliminating the time USDVA would normally spend developing for evidence from that Veteran. USDVA is able to process these claims far more quickly than claims going through the traditional claims process. In addition, USDVA has established priority channels to expeditiously route FDCs.

H.R. 2377 (2011), the Rating and Processing Individuals’ Disability (RAPID) Claims Act (Donnelly)

- Codifies into law the USDVA’s nationwide Fully Developed Claim program which allows a veteran to bypass the lengthy claim development period by submitting a complete claim that needs no further substantiating evidence. This program has been operating as a pilot program since 2008, and while USDVA subsequently made the program available to all veterans nationally, it still lacks the permanence that comes with an Act of Congress.
- The bill would amend the Fully Developed Claim program to allow veterans to notify the USDVA that a fully developed claim is forthcoming, which would secure the effective date of compensation for a veteran participating in the program. Since the time it takes for a veteran to gather evidence on his own to support his fully developed claim can take months or up to a year, this could save a veteran hundreds or even thousands of dollars in compensation.
- If the USDVA determines that a veteran’s fully developed claim is not eligible to be processed under the program for whatever reason, the bill would require the USDVA to notify the veteran of what the claim is lacking.
- Finally, the bill would require that when the USDVA provides any claim decision to a veteran, it must also automatically include an appeal form so that veterans wishing to appeal the USDVA’s decision can do so more quickly instead of having to ask for an appeal form and waiting for the USDVA to provide it. Approximately 35,000 to 40,000 veterans appeal USDVA decisions each year.

FY10 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF VA EXPENDITURES (GDX)

CALIFORNIA Expenditures in \$000s			
County/ Congressional District	Veteran Population*	Total Expenditure	Compensation & Pension
SAN DIEGO	234,959	\$ 627,730	\$ 627,730
LOS ANGELES	345,792	\$ 498,346	\$ 498,346
RIVERSIDE	130,084	\$ 288,906	\$ 288,906
SAN BERNARDINO	117,188	\$ 222,885	\$ 222,885
SACRAMENTO	98,675	\$ 211,600	\$ 211,600
ORANGE	139,719	\$ 186,104	\$ 186,104
SOLANO	39,655	\$ 121,874	\$ 121,874
ALAMEDA	66,785	\$ 111,588	\$ 111,588
SANTA CLARA	69,487	\$ 102,889	\$ 102,889
CONTRA COSTA	62,510	\$ 98,472	\$ 98,472
FRESNO	47,513	\$ 94,218	\$ 94,218
KERN	46,451	\$ 87,819	\$ 87,819
SAN JOAQUIN	37,436	\$ 72,092	\$ 72,092
VENTURA	51,789	\$ 71,137	\$ 71,137
MONTEREY	22,703	\$ 69,959	\$ 69,959
SHASTA	18,107	\$ 59,382	\$ 59,382
STANISLAUS	27,018	\$ 59,237	\$ 59,237
SONOMA	33,245	\$ 54,940	\$ 54,940
SAN FRANCISCO	27,679	\$ 52,569	\$ 52,569
PLACER	32,493	\$ 51,594	\$ 51,594
TULARE	18,404	\$ 46,990	\$ 46,990
BUTTE	18,815	\$ 46,027	\$ 46,027
SAN MATEO	31,953	\$ 44,886	\$ 44,886
SANTA BARBARA	26,608	\$ 44,365	\$ 44,365
SAN LUIS OBISPO	22,626	\$ 34,642	\$ 34,642
EL DORADO	15,625	\$ 30,904	\$ 30,904
HUMBOLDT	11,501	\$ 30,433	\$ 30,433
MERCED	12,957	\$ 27,576	\$ 27,576
SANTA CRUZ	14,042	\$ 26,832	\$ 26,832
KINGS	10,543	\$ 24,101	\$ 24,101
MENDOCINO	7,531	\$ 22,922	\$ 22,922
YOLO	8,533	\$ 22,227	\$ 22,227
NEVADA	11,285	\$ 20,931	\$ 20,931
SUTTER	6,963	\$ 20,280	\$ 20,280
NAPA	9,071	\$ 20,135	\$ 20,135
LAKE	7,545	\$ 19,024	\$ 19,024
YUBA	5,303	\$ 18,968	\$ 18,968
MARIN	15,722	\$ 18,697	\$ 18,697
MADERA	9,223	\$ 17,527	\$ 17,527
TEHAMA	6,411	\$ 15,476	\$ 15,476
TUOLUMNE	7,183	\$ 14,875	\$ 14,875
IMPERIAL	6,933	\$ 14,018	\$ 14,018
DEL NORTE	3,093	\$ 10,954	\$ 10,954
SISKIYOU	4,611	\$ 10,880	\$ 10,880
CALAVERAS	5,777	\$ 9,363	\$ 9,363
AMADOR	4,471	\$ 7,029	\$ 7,029
LASSEN	3,775	\$ 6,516	\$ 6,516
SAN BENITO	3,039	\$ 6,297	\$ 6,297
PLUMAS	2,414	\$ 5,499	\$ 5,499
MARIPOSA	2,367	\$ 4,935	\$ 4,935
TRINITY	1,550	\$ 4,870	\$ 4,870
GLENN	1,702	\$ 3,580	\$ 3,580
MODOC	837	\$ 2,900	\$ 2,900
INYO	1,543	\$ 2,618	\$ 2,618
COLUSA	1,404	\$ 1,963	\$ 1,963
MONO	832	\$ 996	\$ 996
SIERRA	357	\$ 918	\$ 918
ALPINE	122	\$ 106	\$ 106
CALIFORNIA (Totals)	1,971,959	\$ 3,804,601	\$ 3,804,601

This graph shows the veteran population, total expenditures, and Compensation and Pension expenditures by the USDVA for each county in California. The table is sorted by the latter figure.

Notes:

* Veteran population estimates, as of September 30, 2010, are produced by

Prior to FY 08, "Loan Guaranty" expenditures were included in the Education & Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (E&VRE) programs. Currently, all "Loan Guaranty" expenditures are attributed to Travis County.

** Unique patients are patients who received treatment at a VA health care

Expenditure data sources: Federal Assistance Awards Data System (FAADS) for Compensation & Pension (C&P) and Education and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (EVRE) Benefits; Veterans Benefits

1. Expenditures are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars. For example,

2. The Compensation & Pension expenditures include dollars for the following programs: veterans' compensation for service-connected disability;

3. Medical Care expenditures include dollars for medical services, medical administration, facility maintenance, educational support, research support,

4. Medical Care expenditures are based on where patients live instead of

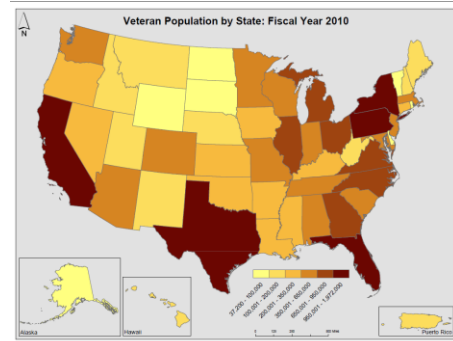
State Programs and Proposals in Veterans Claims Outreach

Overview of California Model

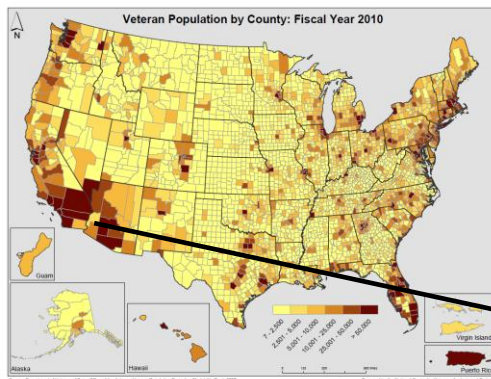


At nearly 2 million, or about 6% of the State's population, California has more veterans than any other state in the union. All told, California is home

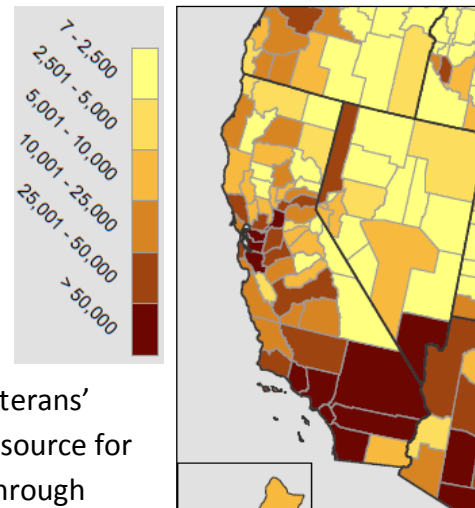
to more than 7 million veterans, dependents and survivors of veterans, representing approximately 27% of California's adult population. In 2005, the federal government spent over \$6 billion in California, of which \$2.6 billion was in the form of disability compensation.



Veterans may apply for compensation and pension benefits in various ways but in summary they must submit a form to the USDVA with documentation of the military member's service, usually in the form of a "DD-214," and medical documentation. Most veterans require assistance in preparing a claim.



Claim assistance is available primarily through County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), however, some claims assistance is also available directly through the CalVet, veterans service organizations, and non-profit entities.



Since CVSOs are located in counties statewide, they are often the initial point of local contact for claimants accessing the USDVA benefit system. Clients are also referred to CVSOs by federal, state and veteran service organization personnel in recognition of their accessibility and acknowledged expertise in the field of veterans' services. Essentially, CVSOs serve as the state's primary resource for connecting veterans with the benefits they have earned through service in the US Armed Forces.



California Association of
County Veterans Service Officers
professional veterans advocates serving California's veterans and their families

Working closely with CalVet and the USDVA, CVSOs provide outreach and advocacy to veterans throughout California. With offices in 54 of California's 58 counties, and employing

over 250 local government employees, the CVSOs represent a significant resource to our veteran community. CVSOs are jointly funded by the state and the respective counties in which they are located.

California's CVSOs 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 California as provided in California's Military and Veterans Code.

Despite the considerable amount of disability compensation currently generated by California veterans, the state is still below the national average with regard to the amount of veterans utilizing their USDVA benefits. In fact, improving benefit participation among California veterans to the national average would produce approximately \$330 million more in annual payments.

In the last couple of years, funding for CVSOs has been reduced. Below is the General Fund support for CVSOs since 2004-2005:

FY 2004-2005-\$2.35 million
FY 2005-2006-\$2.35 million
FY 2006-2007-\$2.60 million
FY 2007-2008-\$2.60 million
FY 2008-2009-\$2.60 million

FY 2009-2010-\$2.60 million
FY 2010-2011-\$7.60 million + \$768K over 3 years for SAIS +\$800,000 GF from savings through the GLAVC veterans home
FY 2011-2012-\$2.6 million

Monetary Benefits Obtained for Veterans by CVSOs - Fiscal Year 2008 - 2009

Participating County	# of Monthly Benefit Payments	Value of Monthly Benefit Payments*	Avg. Value of Monthly Benefit Payments	Annualized Value of Monthly Payments	# of One-Time Benefits Obtained**	Value of One-Time Benefits Obtained	Avg. Value of One-Time Benefits Obtained
Alameda	191	\$59,239	\$467	\$1,070,858	191	\$1,023	\$42
Amador	27	\$21,899	\$811	\$262,788	54	\$511,078	\$9,464
Butte	156	\$107,103	\$687	\$1,285,236	184	\$1,052,556	\$5,720
Calaveras	9	\$7,431	\$826	\$89,172	9	\$18,674	\$2,075
Colusa	3	\$1,221	\$410	\$14,772	4	\$17,848	\$9,445
Contra Costa	948	\$452,337	\$477	\$5,428,044	1,076	\$4,470,455	\$4,155
Del Norte	95	\$61,667	\$647	\$737,604	105	\$1,021,124	\$9,725
El Dorado	199	\$147,959	\$744	\$1,775,508	232	\$1,892,376	\$8,157
Fresno	532	\$264,448	\$497	\$3,173,376	550	\$2,408,719	\$4,379
Glenn	24	\$44,369	\$1,849	\$532,428	28	\$155,096	\$5,539
Humboldt	318	\$197,627	\$621	\$2,371,524	401	\$2,116,614	\$5,278
Imperial	102	\$169,885	\$1,666	\$2,038,620	136	\$405,220	\$4,850
Inyo	22	\$21,505	\$978	\$258,060	29	\$139,643	\$4,815
Kern	753	\$484,717	\$644	\$5,816,604	778	\$3,913,608	\$5,030
Kings	292	\$194,481	\$666	\$2,333,772	310	\$1,239,208	\$3,997
Lake	171	\$87,304	\$511	\$1,047,648	226	\$914,837	\$4,048
Lassen	35	\$17,104	\$489	\$26,248	39	\$329,239	\$8,442
Los Angeles	952	\$551,581	\$579	\$6,618,972	1,127	\$4,366,717	\$3,875
Madera	15	\$11,453	\$764	\$137,436	16	\$95,022	\$5,939
Marin	127	\$75,829	\$597	\$909,948	161	\$794,730	\$4,936
Mariposa	19	\$11,934	\$628	\$143,208	19	\$96,170	\$5,062
Mendocino	113	\$86,278	\$763	\$1,036,276	173	\$1,321,213	\$7,637
Merced	160	\$64,136	\$401	\$769,632	175	\$400,619	\$3,432
Modoc	9	\$10,545	\$1,172	\$126,540	9	\$102,062	\$11,340
Monro	2	\$199	\$100	\$2,388	4	\$1,298	\$325
Monterey	497	\$277,758	\$559	\$3,233,096	526	\$2,439,806	\$4,638
Napa	148	\$95,471	\$645	\$1,145,652	157	\$811,453	\$5,168
Nevada	218	\$113,459	\$520	\$1,361,508	242	\$1,462,496	\$6,043
Orange	1,046	\$553,968	\$530	\$6,647,616	1,084	\$3,901,751	\$3,599
Placer	1,194	\$1,187,466	\$995	\$12,249,592	1,299	\$8,180,090	\$6,297
Plumas	51	\$19,302	\$378	\$221,624	52	\$223,239	\$4,293
Riverside	2,118	\$1,079,925	\$510	\$12,959,100	2,394	\$8,989,301	\$3,755
Sacramento	423	\$242,494	\$573	\$2,909,928	452	\$2,034,917	\$4,502
San Benito	47	\$31,940	\$680	\$583,280	48	\$239,122	\$4,982
San Bernardino	2,030	\$913,581	\$450	\$10,962,972	2,253	\$8,899,425	\$3,950
San Diego	729	\$629,609	\$864	\$7,555,308	745	\$2,714,198	\$3,643
San Francisco	456	\$229,004	\$502	\$2,748,048	504	\$2,789,645	\$5,535
San Joaquin	510	\$241,586	\$474	\$2,899,032	689	\$2,550,255	\$3,701
San Luis Obispo	347	\$153,076	\$441	\$1,836,912	393	\$1,590,870	\$4,048
San Mateo	148	\$164,556	\$1,112	\$1,974,672	152	\$1,173,903	\$7,723
Santa Barbara	337	\$237,232	\$704	\$2,846,784	383	\$2,431,337	\$6,348
Santa Clara	657	\$364,241	\$554	\$4,370,892	700	\$3,608,965	\$5,156
Santa Cruz	152	\$109,511	\$720	\$1,314,132	166	\$1,482,336	\$8,930
Shasta	449	\$273,829	\$610	\$3,285,948	551	\$3,003,369	\$5,451
Siskiyou	17	\$30,875	\$1,816	\$370,500	19	\$238,304	\$12,542
Solano	901	\$427,237	\$474	\$5,126,844	1,018	\$4,158,102	\$4,085
Sonoma	444	\$207,808	\$468	\$3,693,696	482	\$3,152,655	\$6,541
Stanislaus	692	\$469,211	\$678	\$5,630,532	795	\$4,501,183	\$5,652
Tehama	19	\$15,337	\$807	\$184,044	19	\$240,564	\$12,661
Trinity	20	\$15,760	\$788	\$189,120	21	\$136,963	\$6,522
Tulare	464	\$207,368	\$447	\$2,458,416	546	\$2,090,574	\$3,829
Tuolumne	124	\$90,272	\$728	\$1,088,264	132	\$1,016,814	\$7,703
Ventura	391	\$313,712	\$802	\$3,764,544	439	\$2,904,146	\$6,615
Yolo	271	\$199,801	\$737	\$2,397,612	309	\$1,659,113	\$5,369
Yuba-Sutter	302	\$183,125	\$606	\$2,197,500	356	\$2,361,500	\$4,247
State-Wide Totals	20,674	\$12,340,570	\$494	\$148,324,840	23,164	\$109,218,595	\$4,655
FY 07-08 Totals	18,102	\$10,734,053	\$589	\$128,808,636	20,575	\$104,349,062	\$5,220
% increase	12.45	13.16	0.66	13.16	11.18	4.46	2.39

*New and increased benefits
**Single and retro payments

Source: California Department of Veterans Affairs

Operation Welcome Home



Operation Welcome Home began January 12, 2010. Operation Welcome Home assisted returning service members in entering back into civilian life by connecting them to their benefits. Veterans were also placed on the Veterans Services email list, from which they receive regular notifications of new legislation, newsletters, changes and opportunities as they relate to veterans benefits and resources.

As part of Operation Welcome Home (OWH), Governor Schwarzenegger introduced the California Veteran Corps (CalVet Corps). The CalVet Corps was comprised of 300 veterans hired by the EDD in partnership with CalVet using \$20 million in funding. The CalVet Corps were responsible for directly contacting each of California's returning veterans at least three times in the first six months of separation from active duty. The CalVet Corps members coordinated access to career services, mental health or substance abuse treatment, and assistance with applying for state and federal veterans benefits.

Funding for OWH was reduced to \$0 in 2011. As a result, the EDD laid off 170 staff and currently retains only 130. That number will be reduced to zero on January 1, 2012. CalVet has also been affected and is losing 18 positions. In short, Operation Welcome Home no longer has a future, and veterans will lose that source of contact and help with finding federal benefits when the final staffers are let go January 1, 2012.

Veteran License Plate



AB 3016 (Conroy) and AB 3033 (Conroy) of 1992 established a special interest license plate program for veterans and also created the Veterans Service Office Fund for the state Department of Veterans Affairs to use to disburse money to counties for the operation of county veterans service offices. Additionally, AB 1066 (Conroy) of 1994 implemented the provisions of AB 3016 and AB 3033, which require that all revenue from fees collected by the DMV in connection with issuing all special veterans related license plates, minus administrative costs, be deposited in the Veterans Service Office Fund.

Currently, the CVSOs receive partial funding for their operations from revenue derived from the sale of the veteran's organization special license plate. Assembly Bill 1908 (Cook) authorized CalVet to modify the design of existing veteran's organization special license plate; 2) required that by July 1, 2011, the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) make available for

internet on-line ordering the veteran's organization license plate; and 3) deleted the provision in the law which required that one-half of the revenue for a replacement decal be deposited in the Environmental License Plate Fund.

The veteran's license plate has a new design and is currently at the DMV for approval. This new design changes the bottom of the plate where it currently says "Veteran" to, "Honoring Veterans". The reason for this change is that the existing plate is not usually purchased by non-veterans. The stickers identifying the units of the military organizations will still be available. Several new stickers will give veterans the opportunity to show they are a veteran with the branch of service identified. In addition stickers will be offered that say "Army Mom", "Marine Corps Family" etc.

The existing plate supply should run out this year and CalVet will be able to start the new plate sales and marketing by December 2011. CalVet and DMV have implemented online sales of the veteran plates and this new process has shown a 50% increase in sales for May & June 2011. The CVSOs get \$7.00/plate for the first year and \$28.00 a year for each year of renewal.

Data Gathering- CalVet and the DMV



CalVet and the DMV have a long history of successful partnerships dealing with numerous specialty license plates that recognize our veterans' service to the nation. On June 25, 2010, that partnership was expanded by a mutual agreement to connect veterans in California with veteran benefit information they may be entitled to for serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Each year DMV issues about seven million driver licenses and identification cards. Of the almost two million veterans residing in California; it is estimated that about 33,000 veterans will apply for or renew their driver license or identification card each month.



5	HAVE YOU SERVED IN THE MILITARY? (Read Veteran Statement on back)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and I want to receive veteran benefits information.

Beginning on July 1, 2011, DMV applications for a driver license or identification card will have a field where veterans can indicate if they want to receive information about benefits available to them. If the veteran field is marked, DMV will provide the CalVet with the names and current mailing addresses of the veterans. This partnership establishes a data-sharing agreement which complies with state and federal privacy and personal information protection laws.

At the beginning of the program CalVet shall receive both hardcopy and electronic contact information from DMV. Later, in January of 2012, CalVet shall begin receiving purely electronic veteran contact information and will migrate to electronic transfer of the contact data. In the next five years, CalVet should have the information on all California Veterans that have chosen to self-identify through the DMV process. CalVet and DMV shall continue this agreement to capture all 1.97 million veterans over the next decade. This will help identify veterans who move here from other states or California residents that join the military and are discharged who have registered with DMV as non-veterans but now are veterans.

Local and Non-Profit Programs and Proposals in Veterans Claims Outreach

Swords to Plowshares



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

Swords to Plowshares' mission is to heal the wounds [of war], to restore dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty among veterans. Founded in 1974, Swords to Plowshares is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that provides counseling and case management, employment and training, housing and legal assistance to veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area. They promote and protect the rights of veterans through advocacy, public education and partnerships with local, state and national entities.

On May 6, 2011 Swords to Plowshares delivered training for attorneys through the Practicing Law Institute (PLI) on **"Advocating for Veterans – The Basics on Benefits, Discharge Upgrades and Cultural Competency."** Over 750 people participated in the training either live and/or via webcast; it was the largest program PLI has ever held.

Attorneys learned how to appropriately represent veterans before the VA and Military Discharge Review Boards. Highlights from the curriculum included:

- Overview on Benefits for Veterans with Disabilities
- Developing and Winning the VA Claim
- Character of Service Determinations/Special Injuries
- Military Discharge Upgrade and Review
- Specific Issues in Discharge Review
- Basic Understanding of Veteran Transition Issues

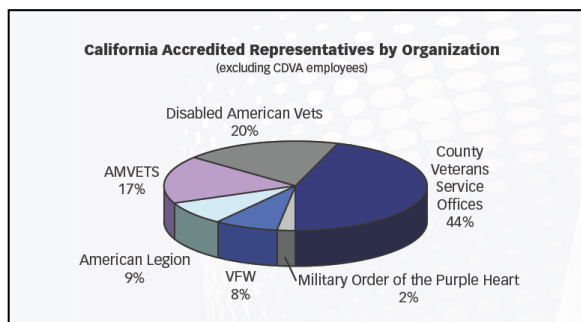
Swords to Plowshares' goal was to broaden it's the knowledge base of its pro bono attorney network on veterans issues and increase the amount of representation available to veterans to assist them in receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. Swords has made the curriculum of this program freely available via the Internet.

The State Bar of California estimates that this pro bono program has contributed to increasing the number of accredited attorneys in California by 24%, and by 4% nationally. A special program session focuses on how attorneys and advocates can better understand how to relate to veterans in transition to a non-combat community.¹

"Unfortunately, the need is greater than can be met," said Swords to Plowshares' Panepinto. **WHO IS PANEPINTO?** The VA has a backlog of more than 1 million benefits claims, which take an average of 161 days to settle and three years to appeal. Swords to Plowshares receives e-mails, phone calls and snail mail from veterans around the country seeking help. "We're definitely looking for more pro bono attorneys and hoping that attorneys all across the state will be interested" in the training, Panepinto said. "A study has shown that veterans with legal representation are more successful in getting their

¹ April 28, 2011 /PRNewswire

claims approved. Swords to Plowshares, the only organization that helps with military discharge upgrades, has been successful more than 95 percent of the time."²



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS (VFW)



The VFW traces its roots back to 1899 when veterans of the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902) founded local organizations to secure rights and benefits for their service: Many arrived home wounded or sick. There was no medical care or veterans' pension for them, and they were left to care for themselves. By 1915, membership had grown to 5,000; by 1936, membership was almost 200,000.

Since then, the VFW's voice had been instrumental in establishing the Veterans Administration, creating a GI bill for the 20th century, the development of the national cemetery system and the fight for compensation for Vietnam vets exposed to Agent Orange and for veterans diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome. In 2008, VFW won a long-fought victory with the passing of a GI Bill for the 21st Century, giving expanded educational benefits to America's active-duty service members, and members of the Guard and Reserves, fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. The VFW also has fought for improving VA medical centers services for women veterans. Annually, the 2.1 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary contribute more than 11 million hours of volunteerism in the community.

National Veterans Service (NVS) Located in Washington, D.C., VFW's NVS office assists veterans and their dependents in acquiring their entitled VA services. Annually, NVS budgets hundreds of thousands of dollars for VFW Departments (states) to assist veterans in filing claims.

- **Department Service Officers (DSOs)** A VFW DSO is located in every VA Regional Office. Each acts as a liaison between VA and individual veterans to help them get government entitlements.
- **Tactical Assessment Center (TAC)** VFW's TAC operates a 24-hour, toll-free hotline for veterans with questions or concerns about VA health care. Since its 1997 inception, TAC has fielded more than 90,000 inquiries.

² Source, CA Bar Journal, April 2011

- **Health Screenings** VFW hosts health screenings at its national convention and other conferences. Eye exams, hearing tests, cholesterol checks, hepatitis C tests, prostate checks and breast exams are just some of the screenings offered. Many lives have been saved thanks to these screenings.
- **Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD)** Introduced in 2001, VFW's BDD provides claims assistance to separating armed forces personnel at designated military installations throughout the country. Education and relocation services also are available.

AMERICAN LEGION



The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest veterans service organization, committed to mentoring and sponsorship of youth programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members and veterans.

The Legion offers a number of local programs and activities: American Legion Baseball is one of the nation's most successful amateur athletic programs; it continues to educate youths on the importance of sportsmanship and develops the quality of our country's citizenship. The Heroes to Hometowns program is the only nationwide reintegration assistance service for wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Additionally, millions of dollars in donations have been given to veterans and their families in times of grief, and various scholarship opportunities ensure the future success of youth.

The American Legion's success depends entirely on active membership, participation and volunteerism. The organization belongs to the people it serves and the communities in which it thrives. The American Legion has staff that assists veterans in filing benefit claims. American Legion department service officers (DSO) offer free advice and guidance for veterans who interact with the USDVA.

AMVETS



As one of America's foremost veteran's service organizations, AMVETS (or American Veterans) has a proud history of assisting veterans and sponsoring numerous programs that serve our country and its citizens. The helping hand that AMVETS extends to veterans and their families takes many forms.

One of the most visible is its network of trained national service officers (NSOs) accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Funded by the AMVETS National Service Foundation, these dedicated men and women can be found in close to 40 states, providing sound advice and prompt action on compensation claims at no charge to the veteran.

In one recent year alone, AMVETS national service officers processed more than 24,000 claims that resulted in veterans receiving some \$400 million in compensation. This commitment to service traces its roots back to 1948, when our NSOs first began helping veterans of World War II to obtain the benefits promised them by the federal government.