



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA
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LEGISLATIVE CHAIR 2022-2023
March Pomo 2023

Greetings Auxiliary Family,

The November 2022 Election is behind us but there is still a lot of local and State legislation that need our attention and action. It is also important that you check to see if your Legislators have changed. You can do this by going to www.VFW.org and go to Legislative priorities at the bottom of the page then by clicking on the right “find your legislators”.

I am happy to report the November election resulted with our new congress having 97 veterans representing 36 states. This is an increase of 5 over the last congress and the most single increase since 1960, and the most members with military experience since 2015. Let them know you value their service.

The VFW championed the PACT Act which added more than 20 presumptive conditions for the burn pits. Agent Orange, and other toxins, extending the VA benefits and compensation to more toxic-exposed veterans and their surviving families more than ever before. Thank you to all that responded to the “Action Alert” and contacted their representatives. It was reported that the Auxiliary outperformed the Comrades in this campaign substantially. This is what the Legislative arm of the Auxiliary is all about, helping to pass legislation that benefits our Veteran’s and their Families.

Legislative Interests

VFW Urges President to Take Lead on Eliminating Offsets: VFW National Commander Tim Borland sent a letter to President Biden in January urgently asking him to make the repeal of concurrent receipt laws a legislative policy priority in the White House’s fiscal year 2024 defense budget request. “Erroneously justified by Congress to prevent “double-dipping,” this policy is nothing more than a way to save money on the backs of veterans,” wrote Borland. “No veteran should question the value of their service to our country due to an unethical budget gimmick.” Offsetting, which forces veterans to forfeit all or part of one benefit to pay for another, is a widely employed practice under concurrent receipt laws. Aside from the 2020 repeal of the “Widow’s Tax,” no substantive concurrent receipt reforms have occurred since 2004. Keep an eye out if this turns into an “Action Alert” campaign.

This is a call to ACTION

Senate Bill 245 was enacted in January 2020, but then COVID-19 lock downs hit and it slipped under the radar. This bill, named PETS for VETS, affects all Shelter Animals in the State of CA. Any Veteran can adopt a dog or cat for FREE at any California Shelter. Many Shelters don't even know this Senate Bill exists. That is why I am calling all District Legislative chairmen to action. Please ask all your Auxiliary chairmen to identify at least one Shelter in their local area and make contact with them to ensure they are aware of this Bill. We need to make sure the Shelters in California and our Veterans know this Bill exists. We need our Veterans to get their pets. Pets benefit their PTSD and general wellbeing. We will also be asking Districts to research and contact Service Dog Trainers in your area to include them in our resources, especially if they have No and reduced service dog training costs for Veterans with Shelter Dogs. Once the posters are placed, take a picture, and send me a report please. Also send me any information on training non-profits for service dogs so we can get a directory out to our districts with the Shelter contact information.

MORE ACTION:

AB 46 Military Services Retirement and Surviving Spouse Benefit Payment Act

This Bill will provide State Tax Exemption and will also affect DOD Survivor benefits program.

This bill is entering its first committee, Budget and Tax, at the end of the month. It currently has an unprecedented 30 co-authors/Assemblymembers signed on in support of it. **The VFW Department of CA has submitted a position letter to the Committee in support of this.**

How can each of you help? As constituents, each of you should have a conversation and/or write a letter to your state Assemblymember seeking their support of this bill. California is the ONLY state that doesn't provide some type of tax exemption to 146,000 military retirees. This isn't the first go around with this effort, but this time it has picked up much more support than in the past. Military retirees contribute significantly to the economy of this state and 17% of them have recently left for greener pastures. We particularly need some pressure on Assemblymembers in Los Angeles County.

A Vet's Day at the Capitol is being planned for mid-April. All VSOs and other veteran organizations will assemble at the state Capitol like we do at our Nation's Capital. I will announce those details once it's set. We'll want to see a lot of VFW covers there.

Make sure all Legislative District Chairs are doing their part and get the word out to their Auxiliaries- let's get this bill passed!

In Service,

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CA Department Auxiliary Legislative Chair 2022-2023

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