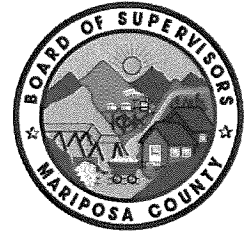


MARIPOSA COUNTY

Administration · 966-3222



RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2021-341

MEETING: June 15, 2021

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dallin Kimble, County Administrative Officer

RE: Approve a Letter of Support to Increase Local Assistance Funding in State Budget for CVSOs

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Approve a Letter of Support to Increase Local Assistance Funding in State Budget for County Veterans Service Officers.

Currently, County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) across California share \$5.6 million annually in local assistance funding from the state. CVSOs have a long and documented record of success of using this funding to help veterans obtain their federal benefits. In FY 2019-20, CVSOs statewide served 172,000 veterans, which resulted in the filing of 272,702 claims for veterans benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result of these efforts, \$542,536,749 were paid directly to California's veterans. When veterans qualify for VA benefits, they receive them for the rest of their lives and sometimes receive a retroactive payment. Therefore, the \$542.5 million attributed to the work of CVSOs in FY 19-20 is added to the billions of dollars that were qualified for in previous years and are still being paid to veterans.

CVSOs are county employees who assist veterans to obtain their earned federal benefits at no cost to veterans and their families. The type and range of federal benefits available to veterans are complex and the process of applying for benefits can be very complicated. Most veterans are unaware of the benefits to which they are entitled and those veterans who pursue claims on their own are often denied their full benefits. Studies have shown that veterans receive more benefits and larger awards by using CVSOs than if they file individually.

CVSO's do not have adequate manpower to increase outreach efforts, and handle the increased workload, to assist underserved demographics (women vets, homeless, incarcerated, rural/urban). As a result, California's veterans are missing out on an estimated \$1.3 billion a year in federal benefits based on comparison with other states. An estimated 75,000 veterans and their families are not getting the benefits to which they are entitled. There are a large number of veterans who are not aware that they are eligible for these federal benefits. This modest budget increase for CVSOs brings in significant returns for state and local economies in jobs, taxes, and stability.

An increase of \$5.4 million from the General Fund can be used effectively at the local level to employ new Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs). For instance, new VSRs

could be placed at one of the 27 military installations in the state that discharge veterans, at federal VA medical facilities, colleges, local government offices in the community, or innovative collaborations such as homeless task forces. Such proactive outreach would dramatically increase the number of veterans that can be reached by the CVSOs, thereby increasing the flow of new federal monies into the state, which in turn enhances tax revenue and stimulates the local economies of the state via the economic multiplier effect. Furthermore, by assisting veterans to obtain these federal benefits, it lightens the load on state and local programs such as Medi-Cal.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Board routinely approves or ratifies letters of support that it determines to be in the best interest of the county.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Do not approve. Staff would not send this letter of support.

ATTACHMENTS:

CVSO Budget augmentation support letter from counties (PDF)

RESULT: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]

MOVER: Rosemarie Smallcombe, District I Supervisor

SECONDER: Wayne Forsythe, District IV Supervisor

AYES: Smallcombe, Sweeney, Long, Forsythe, Menetrey

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1 ... ROSEMARIE SMALLCOMBE
District 2 TOM SWEENEY
District 3 MARSHALL LONG
District 4 WAYNE FORSYTHE
District 5 MILES MENETREY



DALLIN KIMBLE
County Administrative Officer

RENÉ LAROCHE
Clerk of the Board

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June 15, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anna Caballero
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #4
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5052
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4167
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support: Proposal to increase local assistance funding in state budget for County Veterans Service Officers (8955-101-0001)

Dear Budget Committee Chairs:

On behalf of the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors, I write to express our support for increasing local assistance funding for the County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) from \$5.6 million to \$11 million on an ongoing basis.

Currently, CVSOs receive \$5.6 million annually in local assistance funding from the state. CVSOs have a long and documented record of success of using this funding to help veterans obtain their federal benefits. In FY 2019-20, CVSOs statewide served 172,000 veterans, which resulted in the filing of 272,702 claims for veterans benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result of these efforts, \$542,536,749 were paid directly to California's veterans. When veterans qualify for VA benefits, they receive them for the rest of their lives and sometimes receive a retroactive payment. Therefore, the \$542.5 million attributed to the work of CVSOs in FY 19-20 is added to the billions of dollars that were qualified for in previous years and are still being paid to veterans.

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An increase of \$5.4 million from the General Fund can be used effectively at the local level to employ new Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs). For instance, new VSRs could be placed at one of the 27 military installations in the state that discharge veterans, at federal VA medical facilities, colleges, local government offices in the community, or innovative collaborations such as homeless task forces. Such proactive outreach would dramatically increase the number of veterans that can be reached by the CVSOs, thereby increasing the flow of new federal monies into the state, which in turn enhances tax revenue and stimulates the local economies of the state via the economic multiplier effect. Furthermore, by assisting veterans to obtain these federal benefits, it lightens the load on state and local programs such as Medi-Cal.

CVSOs stand ready to assist with veterans who are experiencing homelessness or are in danger of becoming homeless. Connecting veterans to the appropriate federal VA services, treatment, and cash benefits can often be the difference between being housed and being on the streets. The number of veteran suicides nationwide continues to rise, and approximately 14 of the 20 veterans who die by suicide each day are not under VA care. This public health crisis requires an approach that meets veterans where they're located.

Governor Newsom and the Legislature have recently focused significant financial resources to safely shelter COVID-19 positive homeless individuals and those that are at high risk per the Center for Disease Control standards. A significant percentage of these individuals could be veterans, for which increased CVSO Program outreach would benefit. Veterans and their families will increasingly be coping with homelessness, mental health issues, those isolated in nursing homes or heavily rural/urban environments, and joblessness as a result of this crisis. Additionally, demand from veterans is outpacing the available staff at the CVSO offices. Many offices have long wait times under normal circumstances. As the stay-at-home order continues and more individuals find themselves out of employment, many veterans will likely contact CVSOs to access additional financial resources for which they may be eligible.

CVSO's do not have adequate manpower to increase outreach efforts, and handle the increased workload, to assist underserved demographics (women vets, homeless, incarcerated, rural/urban). As a result, California's veterans are missing out on an estimated \$1.3 billion a year in federal benefits based on comparison with other states. An estimated 75,000 veterans and their families are not getting the benefits to which they are entitled. There are a large number of veterans who are not aware that they are eligible for these federal benefits. This modest budget increase for CVSOs brings in significant returns for state and local economies in jobs, taxes, and stability.

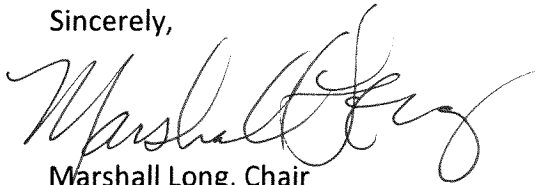
There is a large number of veterans who are not aware that they are eligible for federal VA benefits, and CVSOs are often the first to inform them about their eligibility. Many of these

veterans are living on fixed incomes and may be relying on state and local programs to stay afloat. It is important that we as a society find these veterans and get them their benefits, which are difficult to apply for.

Outreach can be difficult. CVSOs are the bridge to finding the correct benefits for qualified veterans. They link veterans to the appropriate programs within the community and can reduce the stress on veterans by dealing with the VA directly.

We ask that you support the Member's Budget Requests from Senator Bob Archuleta and Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris which seek the \$5.4 million local assistance increase in the state budget for CVSOs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marshall Long". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marshall" being more prominent than the last name "Long".

Marshall Long, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on the Budget
Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on the Budget
Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Bob Archuleta
The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris
California State Association of Counties
Rural Counties Representatives of California