

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
Sharon Quirk-Silva, Chair
AB 1565 (V. Manuel Pérez) – As Amended: April 22, 2014

SUBJECT: Department of Veterans Affairs: state services for veterans

SUMMARY:

Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to:

- 1) Review existing providers of transportation services to veterans for the purpose of identifying those areas of the state most in need of volunteer transportation providers for veterans.
- 2) Compile a list, by county, of veterans' transportation providers.
- 3) Make the list available on its Internet Web site and on mobile devices, as specified.

EXISTING LAW: Establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is responsible for administering various programs and services for the benefit of veterans.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown at this time

COMMENTS: Today, America's military veterans have specific and growing transportation needs that threaten to undermine their quality of life if left unmet. Health care visits- both of emergent and therapeutic nature- are the most obvious and critical of these trips.

According to the author:

Two million veterans live in California, and many need transportation services to access needed medical care and related services, yet there exists no single information source for veterans in California to find out about affordable transportation services in their communities.

A common assumption is that veterans' transportation services are met through a network of federal and state programs. In fact, veterans' transportation needs are mostly delivered through locally-organized volunteer programs. The decentralized nature of these programs means that there is no consistent delivery system or information access point to find out about them.

AB 1565 will add Section 713 to the Military and Veterans code to create a centralized information point that veterans can access for purposes of identifying service providers in their county that can help them with their transportation needs. Having direct access to information about veteran transportation service providers in the state, posted on one website and accessible through a mobile application, will help veterans better identify and coordinate their health-related trips.

According to "Transportation for America's Veterans and Their Families" Report by the National Resource Center:

A pressing need which surfaced in the Washington State Veterans Forum: A Symposium on Transportation Access for Veterans, Military Personnel, and Their Families was the need to improve communication to veterans, their families, and their support networks about the transportation-related options available to them and how they may be used.

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Healthcare System provides primary care, specialized care, and related medical and social support to serve America's Veterans' health and wellness needs. ... To enhance the VHA system, the Central Business Office is launching a new transportation program for immobilized and remote VA patients to enhance existing programs implemented by local VA Medical Centers. Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) seeks to provide transportation services to include vehicle routing/scheduling software for VA Medical Facilities. The ride scheduling and routing systems will include GPS modules for VTS vehicles.

Thus the United States Department of Veterans Affairs is also interested in the issue raised by this bill.

Policy Questions for members:

Does this action, compiling a list of veteran transportation providers, require legislation?
Does publicizing this list constitute an improper endorsement by the state of providers?
Does publicizing this list create any potential liability for the state should an accident occur?

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None.

Opposition

None.

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