

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1565 (V. Manuel Pérez)

As Amended August 4, 2014

Majority vote

ASSEMBLY: 57-14 (May 19, 2014)

SENATE: 26-9 (August 20, 2014)

Original Committee Reference: VETERANS

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Director of the California Department of Aging (CDA) to initiate a process to seek proposals for grants to non-profit organizations experienced in providing culturally competent services and training, for three categories of services: outreach to elder lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) veterans; referrals to agencies, individuals, and other entities that provide services to LGBT elders; and, to provide coordinated training, outreach, and education to agencies, individuals and entities such as county veteran services offices and congressionally authorized veterans' service organizations, that serve LGBT veterans, to the extent funds are appropriated for the purpose.

The Senate amendments delete the Assembly approved version of the bill which added language to the Military and Veterans Code directing the Department of Veterans Affairs to review existing veterans' transportation providers in order to identify areas in the state most in need of volunteer transportation for veterans.

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Annual administrative expenses of \$63,603 (General Fund)
- Unknown appropriation for future grant funding (General Fund)

The Department of Aging estimates the need for 0.6 PY. First year costs reflect startup activities to request proposals, post award notices, and develop contracts. Ongoing costs result from contract oversight and grant administration activities.

COMMENTS:

- 1) This bill is permissive in nature and contingent upon grant funding being available.
- 2) According to the author, "California is the state with the largest LGBT veteran population, yet these veterans do not access their earned benefits and health care at the same rate as heterosexual vets. There are lots of reasons for why this happens – but fundamentally it's the legacy of discriminatory policies within the military. For one, our older veterans served prior to Don't Ask Don't Tell and its later repeal. They internalized a lot of pain and discrimination, and they feel some trauma and fear – even decades later – when it comes to accessing military services and benefits. Second, it's also about cultural competency – which we know is so important in the delivery of health care and other services. Trust is a big issue. The result of this gap is that LGBT veterans go without adequate care, which has serious health implications for the identification and treatment of disease, particularly as the population ages. So we have people with chronic conditions, service-related injuries, and age-related diseases going untreated."

- 3) A recent informational hearing of the Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care entitled "Faces of Aging: Aging and the LGBT Community" received testimony from state and national experts involved in providing services to older LGBT citizens. Testimony revealed LGBT people, including LGBT veterans, exhibit higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, poor mental health, and physical disability compared to demographically similar straight adults. Homophobia, heterosexism, heteronormativity, and stigma, coupled with limited legal recognition, family-of-origin estrangement, and historical discrimination contribute to disparities which could be overcome with specific outreach, training and education. AB 1565 can improve assurances that benefits earned by California Veterans are accessed and utilized to encourage optimum health and wellness, and discourage future reliance upon state funded entitlements.
- 4) California's demographics are changing quickly, both in terms of age and diversity. Future legislatures may feel compelled to develop legislation to address other population groups whose care into the future will require a wide range of cultural competencies.

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