

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

AB 1882 (Villapudua) – Amended April 11, 2024

SUBJECT: Disabled veterans

SUMMARY: Revises eligibility criteria for the disabled veteran’s plate and exempts partially disabled veterans, as defined, from paying vehicle registration fees. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Defines a “disabled veteran”, for purposes of establishing eligibility for a disabled veteran license plate or placard, as a person who, as a result of injury or disease suffered while on active service with the armed forces of the United States suffers from any of the following:
 - a) Cannot walk without the use of, or assistance from, an assistant device, including a brace, cane, crutch, another person, or a prosthetic device, wheelchair, or similar device;
 - b) Has visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses or visual acuity of more than 20/200 but with a limited field of vision in which the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle of 20 degrees or less;
 - c) Cannot walk 200 feet without stopping to rest;
 - d) Is restricted by lung disease to the extent that the person’s forced (respiratory) expiratory volume for one second when measured by spirometry is less than one liter, or the person’s arterial oxygen tension (pO₂) is less than 60 mm/Hg on room air while the person is at rest;
 - e) Has a cardiac condition to the extent that the person’s functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to standards set by the American Heart Association;
 - f) Is severely limited in the ability to walk because of an arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic condition;
 - g) Has a disorder of the foot that, in the opinion of a physician, limits or impairs the person’s ability to walk, or has another debilitating condition that, in the opinion of a physician or a person authorized by applicable law to practice medicine in a hospital or other health facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, limits or impairs the person’s ability to walk; and,
 - h) Uses portable oxygen.
- 2) Expands exemption from motor vehicle registration fees to “partially disabled veterans.”

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) For motor vehicle purposes, defines a “disabled veteran” as any person who, as a result of injury or disease suffered while on active service with the armed forces of the United States, suffers any of the following:
 - a) Has a disability which has been rated at 100% by the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) or the military service from which the veteran was discharged, due to a diagnosed disease or disorder which substantially impairs or interferes with mobility;
 - b) Is so severely disabled as to be unable to move without the aid of an assistant device;
 - c) Has lost, or has lost use of, one or more limbs; and,

- d) Has suffered permanent blindness, as defined in Section 19153 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. (Vehicle Code Section (VEH) 295.7)
- 2) Requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue to a qualifying veteran a disabled veteran placard or license plates. (VEH 5007)
- 3) Permits a vehicle with a disabled veteran license plate or placard to use designated disabled parking spaces. (VEH 22511.8)
- 4) Except for fees for duplicate license plates, duplicate certificates, or duplicate cards, exempts from fees for a single vehicle subject to registration, and that is not used for transportation for hire, compensation, or profit, any of the following:
 - a) A disabled veteran;
 - b) A former American prisoner of war;
 - c) The surviving spouse of a former American prisoner of war who has elected to retain the issued special license plates issued;
 - d) A Congressional Medal of Honor recipient; and,
 - e) The surviving spouse of a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient who has elected to retain the issued special license plates. (VEH 9105)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *According to the author,* “AB 1882 addresses a glaring oversight in statute that can make it harder for disabled veterans to qualify for a license plate specifically created for them, compared to a standard disabled person’s license plate. A large portion of other states have regulations that mirror or expand upon federal regulations yet California’s seems to make it more stringent. Additionally partially disabled veterans are stuck behind the “all or nothing” privileges that come with a disabled veteran license plate. This bill would remedy that by providing vehicle registration fee waivers to veterans with a 50% service-connected disability. With veterans playing a crucial part to economic growth and increased civic engagement, we should not make it more challenging to qualify for privileges that many other states willingly give. California once was the most populous state for veterans. This policy can help restore the image of this state being a veteran-friendly state to reside in.”

Exemption registration fees: Beyond expanding eligibility for a disability plate, this bill would also exempt newly qualified disabled veterans from having to pay various fees. These include: vehicle registration fee (\$65), California Highway Patrol fee (\$29), vehicle license fee (\$93) and the transportation improvement fee (\$70).

American Legion Department of California (AMVETS), writing in support of this bill, argues “The current criteria for Disabled Veteran License Plates are excessively restrictive and fail to recognize the diverse range of disabilities that veterans may experience. By expanding the eligibility criteria, AB 1882 ensures that more disabled veterans can access the privileges they deserve, acknowledging their service and sacrifice.”

Committee concerns: According to the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), The Motor Vehicle Account (MVA), the primary funding source for DMV, is expected to fully exhaust its reserves and become insolvent in 2025-26. The LAO recommends the Legislature should consider MVA cost pressures when evaluating new proposals. LAO argues that “Until a plan is put in place to

address MVA’s structural deficit, we recommend the Legislature set a high bar for considering approval of any proposals that create additional MVA cost pressures and accelerate the risk of insolvency.”

Previous Legislation: AB 2837 (C. Garcia) of 2022 would have reduced the disability rating required to be considered a disabled veteran from 100% to 70% for veterans that meet the definition of “disabled veteran”. That bill was held on suspense in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 459 (Mathis) of 2021 would have provided for partially disabled veterans to receive a prorated vehicle registration fee based on the disability rating they have. That bill was held on suspense in Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

American Ex-Prisoners of War
American Legion Department of California (AMVETS)
California Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America
California State Commanders Veterans Council
County of San Joaquin
Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
Ventura County Chapter of The Military Officers Association of America

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: David Sforza / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093