

Date of Hearing: March 19, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

AB 1873 (Obernolte) – As Introduced January 16, 2018

SUBJECT: Driver's licenses: veteran designation

SUMMARY: Prohibits the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) from charging the one-time \$5 fee to a person applying for a driver's license or identification card with a veterans designation if the veteran is age 62 or over.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a verification form in consultation with DMV and the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers. A county veteran's service office verifies a person's veteran status and signs the verification form, and DMV then accepts the signed verification form as proof of an applicant's veteran status.
- 2) Upon payment of a fee and verification of an applicant's veteran status, requires DMV to print the word "veteran" on the face of a driver's license or identification card.
- 3) Requires DMV to charge a one-time additional fee of \$5 to a person applying for a driver's license or identification card with a veteran designation and authorizes DMV to increase the fee to not more than \$15 to cover its reasonable costs.
- 4) Prohibits DMV from charging a fee for an original or replacement identification card to a person who can verify his or her status as a homeless person or homeless child or youth.
- 5) Prohibits DMV from charging a fee for an original or replacement identification card to a person who can verify that they meet eligibility requirements for certain public assistance programs, as specified.
- 6) Requires the DMV to charge an applicant \$34 for the issuance or renewal of a driver's license.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: In 2014, Governor Brown signed AB 935 (Frazier), Chapter 644, Statutes of 2014, requiring DMV to issue driver's licenses and identification cards with a veteran designation to eligible applicants, beginning November 2015. The purpose of the designation was intended to give veterans an efficient means of proving their eligibility for benefits and discounts instead of carrying their discharge papers, the DD-214, on their persons at all times. It further provided incentive for veterans to visit their County Veteran Service Officer, who could in turn help them determine what, if any, benefits they may be eligible for. At the time, the San Diego Union Tribune found that California veterans may be losing out on \$400 million in federal benefits.

The original goals of the program are coming to fruition. California is currently home to 1.7 million veterans, 850,000 of which are over the age of 60. Between November 2015 and December 2017, 62,140 driver's licenses with veteran designations have been issued. According

to the California Department of Veteran Affairs, 18,000 of those veterans ended up applying for federal veteran's benefits. As a result, \$17 million in benefits were awarded retroactively. An additional \$31 million were awarded to veterans prospectively, and they will receive these awards on an annual basis.

In order to pay for the costs of administering the veteran designation program, DMV charges a one-time \$5 fee. This fee is currently waived for veterans who are either homeless or meet income eligibility requirements for public assistance programs like CALWORKS, MEDI-CAL and CalFresh.

Author's statement: According to the author, "AB 1873 allows a fee waiver for a senior to receive a veteran designation on a driver's license or ID card. Fee waivers are already offered to low-income or homeless veterans. Additionally, seniors are already allowed an ID card free of charge. These seniors made significant sacrifices to serve our country and they should not be forced to pay for a 'veteran' designation, a distinction they earned."

Committee concerns: DMV has the statutory authority to charge as much as \$15 for the veteran designation program. Excluding nearly half of the current veteran population from paying the \$5 fee could result in an increased fee for the rest of the veteran population and slow down applications from veterans from more recent wars like Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Double referral: This bill will be referred to the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee should it pass out of this committee.

Previous legislation: AB 935 (Frazier), Chapter 644, Statutes of 2014, requires the DMV to offer a driver's license or identification card printed with the word "veteran" to an eligible applicant.

AB 363 (Quirk-Silva), Chapter 579, Statutes of 2017, prohibits the DMV from charging the one-time \$5 fee to a person applying for a driver's license or identification card with a veteran designation if the applicant is homeless or is determined to have a current income level that meets eligibility requirements for certain public assistance programs.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American G.I Forum of California
American Legion-Department of California
AMVETS-Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California State Commanders Veterans Council
Military Officers Association of America-The California Council of Chapters.
Riverside Sheriff's Association

Opposition

None on file

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