

Date of Hearing: March 18, 2014

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
AB 1557 (Holden) – As Amended: March 10, 2014

SUBJECT: Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges: student member.

SUMMARY: Adds to the Board of Governors (BOG) of the California Community Colleges (CCC) one voting student member who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States; and, stipulates that commencing with the first vacancy of the BOG, after the operative date of this bill, at least one of the 12 members appointed shall be a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Stipulates that commencing with the first vacancy after the operative date of this measure, at least one of the 12 members appointed shall be a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States who has demonstrated expertise and leadership in the field of veterans' affairs.
- 2) Adds a voting student member to the BOG who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States, as defined.
- 3) Defines "member" to mean an appointed voting student member as specified.
- 4) Specifies that a member may exercise the same privileges of a voting student member serving a second year term appointed, as specified.
- 5) Specifies that if a member resigns or the office is otherwise vacant, a voting student member who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States, as defined, and who meets the requirements established in this measure shall be appointed by the Governor.
- 6) Exempts the voting student member who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States from the certain restrictions to other student members of the BOG, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the membership of the CCC BOG to consist of 16 voting members and one nonvoting member (Education Code § 71000).
- 2) Specifies that except for student members, the faculty members, and the classified employee member appointed by the Governor, any vacancy in an appointed position on the board shall be filled by appointment by the Governor, subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the membership of the Senate; and, that a vacancy in the office of a student member, a faculty member, or the classified employee member shall be filled by appointment by the Governor (EC § 71003).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Background: Under current law, the CCC BOG consists of 16 voting members, all appointed by the Governor. These include:

- 1) Twelve members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the membership of the Senate. These members serve for six-year (staggered) terms. Two of the thirteen members shall be current or former elected members of local CCC district governing boards.
- 2) One voting student member and one nonvoting student member, as specified, to be appointed from a list of names of at least three persons submitted to the Governor by the California Student Association of Community Colleges.
- 3) Two tenured faculty members, for two-year terms, appointed from a list of names of at least three persons furnished by the Academic Senate of the CCCs.
- 4) One classified employee, for a two-year term, appointed from a list of at least three persons furnished by the exclusive representatives of classified employees of the CCCs.

The CCC BOG sets policy and provides guidance for the 72 districts and 112 colleges that constitute the system. They formally interact with state and federal officials and other organizations. Additionally, the board selects a chancellor for the system. The chancellor, through a formal process of consultation, brings recommendations to the board.

To note, the current BOG President, Manuel Baca, is a United States Marine Corps veteran and BOG member Lance Izumi was a reservist with the California State Military Reserve.

Purpose of the bill. According to the author, CCCs enroll the vast majority of California veterans seeking higher education opportunities. The author believes that it is imperative that veterans are given two seats on the CCC BOG in order to provide first-hand insight as the BOG develop veteran-specific long- and short-term educational policies.

The author states, "With strategic planning, CCCs can play a prominent role in providing our veterans as well as active duty members with vocational training, career advancement training, opportunities to achieve Associate Degrees, and a path to four year colleges—that is why it is essential that we expand the CCC BOG to include two representatives from this group." The author goes on to state that, "Veterans returning to college face unique challenges and colleges across the state are scrambling to offer support. If campuses are not prepared to help these soldiers transition from combat to college, we run the risk of alienating thousands of returning vets; with this bill we are saying, we are committed to helping our student veterans – you are not alone, we hear you."

Joint hearing on student veteran issues. To prepare for the influx of veterans, on February 28, 2012, the Assembly Higher Education and Assembly Veterans Affairs Committees held a joint oversight hearing on the challenges facing California student veterans. Several students and representatives from the higher education institutions spoke for the need for more resources for veterans' services, including more transition assistance, improving outreach and campus-based programs, and easing the matriculation of prior military learning.

Current student veterans outreach. According to the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), with an estimated 1.8 million veterans residing in California, our state has the largest population of veterans in the nation. According to the CCC Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), many of the increasing number of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will look to one of the 112 community colleges as the most easily accessible and affordable educational option available. More than 44,000 veterans and active duty service members enrolled at a CCC in 2012. The CCCs serve nearly five times the combined number of student veterans enrolled at the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) systems.

The CCCs are providing more services to a growing population of student veterans; the CCCCCO recognizes the need for continued support of our student veterans and as such has been the lead on several statewide projects, including:

- 1) **Veterans Resource Center Project:** At Veterans Resource Centers (VRCs) student veterans can interact with one another and obtain information and services. The CCCCCO partnered with the High Tech Center Training Unit at De Anza College (in Cupertino, CA) to offer free hardware, software and on-site training in assistive technology to colleges that promote academics, camaraderie, and wellness; provide a dedicated space for student veterans; and offer coordinated services such as financial aid and counseling to veterans. As a result, 24 additional colleges have established a VRC on their campus.

To note, because the individual campuses do not have to report to the CCCCCO as to if they have a VRC, it is presently unknown the exact number of campuses that have VRCs, however, it is estimated that at least half of the CCCs have a VRC. Additionally, VRCs are staffed by either full-time employees or a mix of volunteers and student mentors.

- 2) **Zellerbach Family Foundation Project:** "Welcome Home: Creating a Campus Community of Wellness for Returning Veterans:" In March 2010, the CCCCCO received a \$75,000 grant from the Zellerbach Family Foundation to support the development and implementation of a training program for faculty and staff to increase awareness on military culture, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and depression in order that faculty and staff can better understand the challenges faced by many community college student veterans. The training has been provided at thirteen colleges and six statewide conferences since its inception and is scheduled to be delivered at an additional eight colleges in 2014.
- 3) **Veterans Summit:** In December 2013, the CCCCCO co-hosted the third Veterans Summit held in Newport Beach, CA. Topics at the summit included VA benefits and education plans, creating Veterans Resource Centers, women veterans, academic counseling, best practices in serving student veterans, mental health issues confronting veterans and accessing federal, state and local resources. For the first time in the three year history of this event, veteran service professionals from the UC and CSU systems participated.

Additionally, according to CalVet, they work very closely with the CCCCCO in the Summit and with several local campuses on veteran issues, including the VRCs.

- 4) **Regional Representation Structure:** The CCCCCO has organized a Veteran Services Regional Advisory Committee and hosts regular meetings of this group to better identify student veteran needs across the system and encourage the exchange of innovative ideas and effective practices

for serving them. The Committee met twice in 2012, three times in 2013 and is scheduled to meet four times in 2014. In addition to meeting in person quarterly, the committee now holds recurring monthly conference calls.

- 5) System-wide Email List: The CCCCO established an internal system-wide email list, through which it communicates information and reports relating to veterans and veterans' services to each of the 112 CCCs and designated college staff. This list provides a way to promptly disseminate urgent and important information to all veteran programs and service providers at each college, and serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas between colleges about issues related to student veterans.

Committee considerations. If the intent of the author is to ensure that all student veterans receive the various resources they need when matriculating through the CCC system, it is presently unclear if this measure will truly address the intention.

Presently, as has been with the last few administrations, there is a large backlog in the appointments process. This backlog, in part, is due to the sheer number of gubernatorial appointments and the lengthy vetting process. The CCC BOG by statute is to have 17 members. There are currently 10 members with several having terms expiring this year. To note, the administration just re-appointed a member of the BOG and appointed a new member; both pending confirmation by the Senate. With this backlog and should this measure be enacted, it is unlikely that the additional veterans' voices will be appointed to the BOG for some time.

Additionally, as presently drafted, the added student member who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States will have voting privileges in year one of his/her term, unlike his/her other student members. Should the added student member be exempt from the current process other student members must follow just because he/she is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States?

Staff recommends the bill be amended to reflect that the student member who is a member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States be subject to the current practices of the other student members, as defined in current law.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Legion, Department of California
AMVETS, Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
Veterans Caucus of the California Democratic Party
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California
An individual

Opposition

Community College League of California

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