

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Mike Fong, Chair
AB 587 (Davies) – As Amended February 27, 2025

SUBJECT: Student Aid Commission: membership.

SUMMARY: Increases the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) membership from 15 to 16, by adding one representative appointed by the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) who is an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the California National Guard, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, or is a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States. And makes technical changes to existing law.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the CSAC for the purpose of administering specified student financial aid programs. Specifies that the CSAC must be composed of the following 15 members:
 - a) One representative from public, proprietary, or nonprofit postsecondary schools located in California;
 - b) One representative from a California independent college or university;
 - c) One representative each from the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), and the California Community Colleges (CCC);
 - d) Two members each of whom must be a student enrolled in a California postsecondary educational institution at the time of appointment, and must be enrolled in a California postsecondary educational institution for the duration of the term. A student member who graduates from an institution with no more than six months of their term remaining must be permitted to serve for the remainder of the term;
 - e) Three public members;
 - f) One representative from a California secondary school;
 - g) Two representatives appointed by the Senate Rules Committee; and,
 - h) Two representatives appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.
 - i) Appointments to CSAC as enumerated above in (1)(a-f) inclusive, must be made by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the California State Senate.
- 2) Stipulates that members, except student members and members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, have four-year terms. Student members have a term of two academic years. Members appointed by the Assembly Speaker serve at the pleasure of the Speaker of the Assembly.

- 3) Requires each member of CSAC to receive a stipend of \$100, as specified. Specifies that if a student member is not the recipient of a Cal Grant award, the member's institution of higher education, as specified, must waive the student member's tuition, up to the maximum award amount for that institution for the entire duration of the student member's term of office (Education Code (EC) Section 69510, et seq.).
- 4) Stipulates that there is in the state government CalVet (Military and Veterans Code (MVC) Section 63).
- 5) Provides that CalVet succeeds to, and is vested with, the duties, powers, purposes, responsibilities, and jurisdiction of the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, the Division of Veterans' Welfare, the Veterans' Welfare Board, the California Veterans' Commission, the Division of Veterans' Homes, the Board of Directors of the Veterans' Home of California, and the Board of Directors of the Woman's Relief Corps Home of California and of the officers and employees of that department (MVC Section 70).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: *Purpose of the measure.* According to the author, "the California Student Aid Commission is a testament of our State's commitment to creating opportunities for upward social mobility. It is in that spirit that we should continue looking for ways to innovate in order to best serve all of California's students. Our veterans offer a unique perspective on their experiences traversing the financial aid system, to further improve these systems in California."

Further, the author contends that, "there is not however a representative of the military community on the commission. This group has needs that can't always be met by civilians. This is exacerbated since a large portion of this group is also first generation (about 62% according to the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs]), making navigating the financial aid field even more difficult. By adding a veteran to the commission we can 'use' their lived experiences navigating these systems to further improve them for all students."

Lastly, the author states that, "this bill will help to strengthen the veteran community's voice in California's financial aid process. CSAC currently manages certain veteran award programs, namely the California Military Department GI Bill Award Program. By including a member of the military community into the commission they can utilize their lived experiences navigating these programs to help further improve the system."

Population of Active Military Personnel and Veterans in California. According to *Military OneSource*, a U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) website that provides resources on active-duty, National Guard, and Reserve service members, as of 2023 (most recent data available), there are over 4.4 million individuals who make up the total DOD force community, including over 2 million (45.7%) DOD military personnel, and over 2.4 million (54.3%) DOD force family members.

According to World Population Review, as of 2022, California had 158,754 active military personnel. Further, as of August 2022 (the most recent data available), according to the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (housed within the U.S. Department of Veterans

Affairs), California is home over 1.4 million veterans; making California home for the second largest number of veterans (Texas being home to the most number of veterans).

Military Affiliated Students in Public Postsecondary Education in California. Committee Staff understands, based on a compilation of data sets from the state's public postsecondary education institutions (CCC, CSU, and the UC) that over 75 thousand military affiliated students are enrolled in one of the institutions.

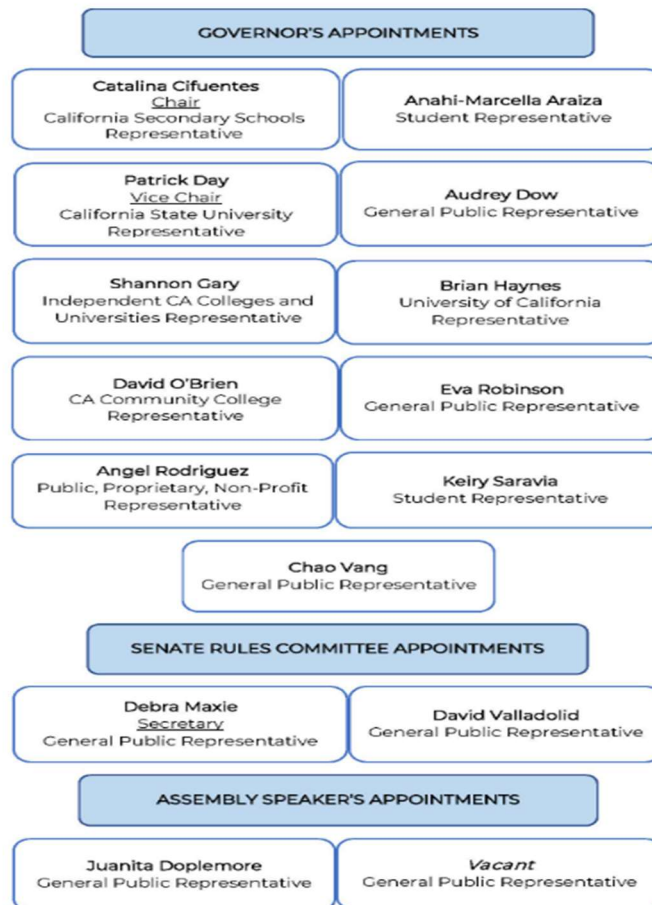
Military affiliated students includes actively serving military personnel, veterans, and dependents.

According to CSAC, using 2024 data, 20,346 military personnel and veterans applied for a Cal Grant (the State's financial aid award); 5,979 were eligible for a Cal Grant, and 3,348 actually drew down on their award and received funding.

Committee Staff understands that while these numbers appear to be low in comparison to the number of military affiliated students matriculating at the CCC, CSU, and UC, many seek to cover the costs of their collegiate experience drawing down on the GI Bill.

Current composition of CSAC. Since 1990, the Commission has had 15-members, comprised of 11 commissioners appointed by the Governor representing five members from the various higher education segments, three members from the general public, two student members, and one member from the secondary schools.

The graph below, from CSAC, depicts the current membership of CSAC:



Committee comments. Pursuant to existing law, the Governor appoints the majority of the membership of CSAC. Committee Staff understands that the appointments of the Governor, in part, are based on recommendations of various stakeholders.

As currently drafted, this measure authorizes the CalVet to appoint a member to CSAC, who is an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the California National Guard, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, or is a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States.

It is presently unclear, why CalVet would have the final authority to appoint this member, thus changing the appointment process.

Moving forward, the author may wish to authorize CalVet to provide the Governor nominees for the membership position, with the Governor appointing the member, pending confirmation by the Senate.

Further, Committee Staff understands that most governing bodies in the state have an odd number, in part, to ensure voting is not deadlocked. If the intent of the author is to have the voice of military affiliated personnel on CSAC, *moving forward, the author may wish to work with CSAC and appropriate stakeholders in order to consider having the military affiliated individual*

placed in one of the three general public positions or reducing the general public representation to two and military affiliated personnel explicitly listed as one of the 15 Commissioners.

Prior legislation. AB 2363 (Ta) of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, which was not pursued by the author and subsequently held by this Committee, would have added a fourth public member to CSAC, bringing the total membership to 16.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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