



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors

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August 14, 2025

The Honorable Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Chair
California Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 80220
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 694 (Archuleta) Deceptive practices: service members and veterans.
(Veterans Benefits Protection Act of 2025) – SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of the County of Monterey, I write in strong support of Senate Bill 694, which strengthens consumer protections for California's veterans by ensuring that only accredited individuals may charge for services related to filing claims for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

The County of Monterey has long been a supporter of veterans and their families. The Monterey County Military & Veterans Affairs Office (MVAO) provides many services to assist veterans and their families in obtaining state and federal benefits. Veterans and service members in California are being targeted by unaccredited agents who offer unaccredited assistance with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits claims. These agents charge unlawful or excessive fees while operating without any oversight. They take advantage of veterans trying to navigate a complex and adversarial benefits system. We have seen firsthand how vulnerable veterans can be misled by unaccredited actors who charge illegal or excessive fees, jeopardize personal data, and often leave veterans worse off.

SB 694 addresses these harms by:

- Prohibiting unaccredited individuals from charging for the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of VA benefit claims;
- Enhancing penalties for unauthorized access to veterans' data on secure VA systems; and
- Codifying fair fee standards under the Consumer Legal Remedies Act.

Additionally, SB 694 reinforces a strong framework for ethical and qualified representation. We believe California's veterans deserve only the most transparent and accountable support when applying for the benefits they have earned through service. Therefore, we support SB 694.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Monterey County's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

DRAFT

Chris M. Lopez, Chair
Board of Supervisors



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cc: The Honorable Senator Bob Archuleta, Author
Members and Consultants, Assembly Appropriations Committee
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)