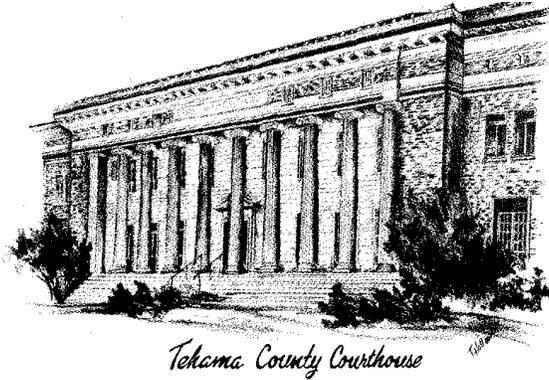


Board of Supervisors
COUNTY OF TEHAMA

District 1 – Steve Chamblin
District 2 – Candy Carlson
District 3 – Dennis Garton
District 4 – Bob Williams
District 5 – Burt Bundy



Williams J. Goodwin
Chief Administrator

March 21, 2017

Senator Richard D. Roth
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub-Committee 4
State Capitol, Room 4034
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: FISCAL YEAR 2017-18 BUDGET REQUEST – DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Dear Senator Roth:

On behalf of the Tehama County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express our concern regarding the budget change proposal submitted in the Governor's Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). This proposal eliminates funding for positions that would have helped to correct persistent federal delays in veterans and their families receiving vital disability compensation and pension benefits.

While a \$1.7 million cut in CalVet's budget might seem logical to some when balancing next year's state budget, it misses the economic impact of those positions. These positions are primarily tasked with helping to reduce federal backlogs in veteran compensation claims and appeals and improving the efficiency of California's new claim submissions. They will do this by directly targeting the existing appeals backlog and preventing future backlogs by improving the quality of new claims being submitted. These actions will result in faster processing by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) and increasing the amount of federal dollars flowing into California. These federal veteran benefits are primarily on-going so the impact on California's economy will also be on-going.

The effectiveness of this approach is proven. These positions were defunded following the highly successful strike team effort during which CalVet employees assisted the USDVA in reducing its claims processing backlog while simultaneously improving the use of fully developed claims, thus greatly reducing the cause of the claims backlog.

Unfortunately, the USDVA now finds itself with a large and increasing backlog in veteran appeals. For many veterans, CalVet is their only advocate in this appeals process; without these positions, veterans lose representation. Funding these positions would have a direct impact on the quality of appeals being submitted, resulting in faster decisions and having a positive impact on the backlog. Veterans ultimately win by getting faster, more accurate decisions so they can move forward with their lives.

The County of Tehama urges you to reject this proposal. Although this is not a budget cut to County subvention, this is a permanent reduction to the CalVet staff that assists our local Veterans Service Office with claims. Less CalVet staff means longer waiting periods on claim decisions for our veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Dennis Garton, Chairman
Tehama County Board of Supervisors

cc: Senator Jim Neilsen
Assemblyman James Gallagher
Ted Puntillo, President, California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.