

CSCVC MEMBERS

(* Founding Member)

American G.I. Forum of California
American Legion, Department of California
American Retirees Association
AMVETS, Department of California*
Association of the U.S. Army – Region 6 & 7
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association of America
Disabled American Veterans, Department of California
Elite Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses
Fleet Reserve Association, West Coast Region
Jewish War Veterans, Department of California*
Marine Corps League, Department of California*
Marine Corps Veterans Association
Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of California*
National Veterans Foundation
National Guard Association of California
Paralyzed Veterans of America, California Chapter
Reserve Organization of America, Department of the Golden West
Scottish American Military Society, West Regional Command
U.S. Submarine Veterans, Gold Country Base
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California*
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council
Women Veterans Alliance

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATE:

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November 5, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of California's 1.6 million veterans and as members of the California State Commanders Veterans Council (CSCVC), we are writing to ask for your assistance in ensuring veterans can continue to access critical services and support networks. The continued closure of our brick and mortar veterans' posts and halls due to COVID-19 is causing significant hardship on countless veterans, as well as threatening the long-term existence of these important places. We respectfully request that you allow these posts and halls to reopen safely now as further delay jeopardizes the well-being of California's veterans.

The CSCVC is recognized in state law as the collective voice for California's major veterans' service organizations. We thank you for your leadership during this unprecedented health crisis. We recognize the difficult choices you have had to make and appreciate your leadership and commitment to keeping Californians safe.

However, as California has begun to reopen, our veterans are being left behind due to the fact veterans' posts have been classified as "bars" under the reopening guidelines. Our posts are membership-only buildings, but many have a restrictive membership-only veterans' liquor license. It is our view that our posts are not "bars" as intended in your executive order. Posts provide many essential services for veterans and their dependents and should be allowed to open.

As you may know, veterans' posts have trained veteran service officers who help veterans navigate and apply for benefits they are entitled to due to their service to our country. These service officers provide assistance to veterans and their dependents in preparing and submitting claims for benefits, such as health care and mental health services; education, job training and retirement benefits to name a few. The closure of our posts has a direct impact on our ability to help veterans process these claims and as a result, thousands of veterans are not able to access the benefits and services they need. Veteran disability and pension claims are down dramatically. We are failing our physically and emotionally disabled veterans and their families during a time when the need for help is so great.

Posts are also a refuge for veterans, many with physical and emotional problems caused by their service to our country. Posts are where veterans gather to share their experiences and seek solace among their comrades. Posts assist and support homeless veterans, as well as those struggling with PTSD or depression.

However, beyond helping veterans, posts and the volunteerism of veterans help local communities. Veterans' posts are always counted on to provide assistance during emergencies, such as fires and floods, serving as emergency evacuation centers and staging centers for first responders. Many of our posts also participate in the emergency broadcast network.

California State Commanders Veterans Council 1107 9th Street, Suite 620 Sacramento, CA 95814

Sadly, many of our posts are beginning to close their doors permanently because their traditional sources of income have been cut off while their on-going monthly expenses continue. This issue is of grave concern to all of our organizations as having these posts closed has a direct and negative impact on the veterans we collectively represent. We need our posts to be open to continue our role helping veterans, our communities and all Californians during this crisis and future emergencies.

Therefore, we the undersigned Commanders and leaders of the CSCVC, are requesting that you issue an Executive Order allowing all veterans posts, halls and memorial buildings to re-open as long as they comply with all ABC and county health restrictions regardless of the status of the counties in which they are located.

We understand how busy you are, but if you would like to meet with us, we will make ourselves available to meet with you to discuss this further.

Again, thank you for your strong leadership during this crisis and we look forward to working with you in the future for the betterment of California's veterans and all its citizens.

Sincerely,

Frederick A. Romero, Chairman
California State Commanders Veterans Council

John G. Lowe, Commander
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of
California

Edward J. Grimsley, Commander
American Legion, Department of California

David Black, Commander
AMVETS, Department of California

Michael Kerr, State Commander
Disabled American Veterans, Department of
California

Dean Gotham, President
Vietnam Veterans of America, California State
Council

Melissa Washington, Founder & CEO
Women Veterans Alliance

Robert Ostenberg, President
Association of the U.S. Army, Northern
California Chapters

Thomas E. Lasser, President
Association of the U.S. Army, Southern
California Chapters

Nathan D. Johnson, President
California Association of County Veterans
Service Officers

George Marsh, Commanding Officer
Marine Corps Veterans Association

Dean Mallires, BG, U.S. Army (ret), President
California Council of Chapters of the Military
Officers Association of America

Jerome Silverman, Commander
Jewish War Veterans, Department of California

David Jackson, Commander
Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of
California

Stan Zezotarski, President
National Guard Association of California

Shad Meshad, President & Founder
National Veterans Foundation

Reese Levasseur, President
Paralyzed Veterans of America, Bay Area &
Western Chapter INC.

Beverly Houghton, President
Reserve Organization of America, Department of
the Golden West

Chuck Jamison, Commanding Captain
Scottish American Military Society, West Regional
Command

Pete Juhos, District Commander, Western District 5
U.S. Submarine Veterans, Gold Country Base

CC: Dr. Vito D. Imbasciani, Secretary, California Department of Veteran Affairs
Members of the California Legislature

