

AB 558 (PETRIE-NORRIS) STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA: SERVICE MEMBERS: LEGAL SERVICES

POSITION: The Chamber's Public Policy Sub-Committee on Defense, Veterans & Military Affairs voted to SUPPORT the bill on June 5, 2019. The Chamber's Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT the bill on June 11, 2019. The Chamber's Board of Director's voted to SUPPORT the bill on June 27, 2019.

RATIONALE: Supporting the veteran and active duty communities remains a Chamber priority.

STATUS: AB 558 was introduced by Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris on February 13, 2019 and was referred to the Senate Committees on Judiciary and Veterans Affairs on April 24, 2019.

SUMMARY

Current law requires the State Bar of California to coordinate legal services to provide pro bono legal assistance to veterans and their families. AB 558 expand eligibility to active duty members and their families who would otherwise not be able to afford legal services.

INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED

The military, law firms and other legal service organizations would be directly impacted by this bill.

SUPPORTERS

- Department of Defense
- San Diego Military Advisory Council
- Veterans Alliance of Orange County

OPPONENTS

None known.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

- According to the author, "unfortunately, service members and their families generally cannot afford to pay attorney fees for representation."
- San Diego has the largest concentration of U.S. military personnel in the world representing a major economic driver for the region. It behooves the business community to support service members and their families to retain and grow the military economy here in San Diego.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

- While the intent is laudable, there are many populations that deserve and need help. This bill does not demonstrate fairness with all populations.
- The cost for providing these expanded services is unknown.