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AB-489 Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Bill No. 489

CHAPTER 329

An act to amend Sections 3401 and 3402 of the Government Code, relating to awards.

[Approved by Governor September 28, 2015. Filed with Secretary of State September 28, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 489, Gonzalez. Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act.

The Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act authorizes the Governor to annually award and present in the name of the State of California a Medal of Valor to one or more public safety officers, as defined, who are cited by the Attorney General, upon the recommendation of the Medal of Valor Review Board, for extraordinary valor above and beyond the call of duty. The act also establishes the Medal of Valor Review Board that recommends candidates to the Attorney General for the Medal of Valor from among the applications received by the board.

This bill would add ocean lifeguards to the list of public safety officers eligible to receive the award and authorize the United States Lifesaving Association to represent ocean lifeguards on the review board.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 3401 of the Government Code is amended to read:

3401. The Governor annually may award and present, in the name of the State of California, a Public Safety Medal of Valor of appropriate design, with ribbons and appurtenances, to one or more public safety officers cited by the Attorney General pursuant to Section 3402 for extraordinary valor above and beyond the call of duty. The medal shall be the highest state award for valor awarded to a public safety officer, which includes any person serving a public agency, with or without compensation, as a firefighter, an ocean lifeguard, a law enforcement officer, including a corrections or court officer or a civil defense officer, or an emergency services officer.

SEC. 2. Section 3402 of the Government Code is amended to read:

3402. (a) There exists in state government the Public Safety Medal of Valor Review Board, whose purpose is to solicit and review applications for, and make recommendations to the Attorney General regarding, the Public Safety Medal of Valor.

(b) The board shall be comprised of one representative selected by each of the following organizations:

(1) The California Association of Highway Patrolmen.

(2) The California Coalition of Law Enforcement Associations.

(3) The California Correctional Peace Officers Association.

(4) The California Peace Officers' Association.

(5) The California Police Chiefs' Association.

(6) The California Professional Firefighters.

(7) The California State Firefighters' Association.

(8) The California State Sheriffs' Association.

(9) The California Statewide Law Enforcement Association.

(10) The Peace Officers Research Association of California.

(11) A group, selected by the board, that represents emergency medical technicians and paramedics.

(12) The United States Lifesaving Association.

(c) The board shall be chaired by a member elected by a majority vote of the members at the first official meeting of the board each year. The board shall meet at the call of the chair. Members shall serve without compensation or reimbursement for travel, per diem, or other expenses, and they shall minimize travel and expenses to the greatest extent possible. Any cost incurred by a member as a result of serving as a member shall not be paid by the state.

(d) The board shall review the applications for the medal to determine which applicants, if any, to recommend to the Attorney General. The board may hear from witnesses and consider whatever information it considers advisable to carry out its duties. The board may secure directly from any state department, or other state or local agency, information as the board considers necessary to carry out its duties. Upon the request of the board, the head of a department or agency may furnish information to the board. The board shall not disclose any information that may compromise an ongoing law enforcement investigation or is otherwise required by law to be kept confidential.

(e) Not more often than once each year, the board may present to the Attorney General the name or names of those persons, if any, it recommends as candidates for the medal.

(f) The board may receive donations to pay for meeting and witness expenses. Witnesses requested to appear before the board may be paid no more than the fees paid to witnesses pursuant to the Code of Civil Procedure. The per diem and mileage allowance may be paid from funds donated to the board and shall not be paid by the state. If donated funds are not available to the board, the board shall not hold hearings or have witnesses.