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SCR-78 Veterans: Team AMVETS. (2015-2016)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 78

CHAPTER 162

Relative to veterans.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 08, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 78, Nielsen. Veterans: Team AMVETS.

This measure would commend AMVETS Department of California, also known as Team AMVETS, for providing benefits and services to veterans, and for playing an important role in the community for 70 years.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, The unprecedented call to military service demanded by World War II led to a record number of returning war veterans in need of assistance and support; and

WHEREAS, The roots of AMVETS National can be traced back to a gathering of 18 veterans in Kansas City, Missouri, on December 10, 1944, who named themselves "The American Veterans" of World War II; and

WHEREAS, This group sought to provide more comprehensive assistance than was currently available from the organizations run by veterans of earlier wars and those operating on college campuses during that time; and

WHEREAS, On July 23, 1947, AMVETS National became the first World War II organization chartered by Congress when President Harry S. Truman signed Public Law 216 (H.R. 1888), giving AMVETS a federal charter under Title 36 of the United States Code and status as a 501(c)(19) nonprofit veterans service organization; and

WHEREAS, In honor and recognition of the sacrifices made by all veterans, membership in AMVETS is open to anyone who is currently serving or has honorably served in the United States Armed Forces, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines, as well as the National Guard and reserve components; and

WHEREAS, On October 20, 1945, the AMVETS Department of California was established and today has over 12,000 members and over 50 local posts in California's communities; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS Department of California is also known as "Team AMVETS" to reflect its mission to serve at the forefront of community and veterans' services for the State of California, and that any patriotic citizen can be a part of Team AMVETS through volunteerism and donating used clothing and household goods to the Team AMVETS Thrift Stores; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS is involved in many aspects of service to veterans and the community. In 2014, AMVETS service officers assisted California veterans in filing 16,365 claims, which resulted in new and retroactive claim payments of almost \$39

million for California veterans; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS has a partnership between the federal Department of Veterans Affairs and the AMVETS Department of California Service Foundation called the Welcome Home Program, which offers furnishings and household items to homeless veterans who receive HUD assistance throughout the state and supports the federal Department of Veterans Affairs' goal to end veteran homelessness by 2015; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS is active in advocating on behalf of veterans and their dependents before the Legislature, the state Department of Veterans Affairs, and state and local agencies, as well as supporting California's National Guard; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS sponsors legislation, supports and monitors approximately 100 veteran-related bills per legislative session, and actively monitors aspects of the state budget process, which affect such issues as veterans' homes, CalVet, National Guard, County Veterans Service Officers, and veterans' outreach programs; and

WHEREAS, The Team AMVETS military funeral honor guards average 4,000 military funerals a year, comprising an average of 20,000 volunteer hours, to veterans' families across the Golden State, at no cost; and

WHEREAS, The federal Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service was founded in 1946 to provide for veterans in federal Department of Veterans Affairs health care facilities. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service is the largest volunteer program in the federal government, with more than 350 national and community organizations involved in support of its mission. Volunteers assist patients by augmenting staff in end-of-life care programs, foster care, community-based volunteer programs, hospital wards, nursing homes, and veteran outreach centers. AMVETS serves as one of the 60 major veteran, civic, and service organizations that comprise the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee. Nationally, every year, AMVETS volunteers provide nearly 200,000 hours of service at VA facilities across the country through the volunteer program. AMVETS volunteers have provided about \$3.5 million worth of services each year helping to provide quality care to our nation's heroes; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS operates five thrift stores in El Cajon, Fresno, Spring Valley, Long Beach, and San Diego. These Team AMVETS Thrift Stores solicit donated goods from the public, then pick up those goods and sell them to the public to raise revenues to fund programs for veterans. Team AMVETS Thrift Stores also give furniture and household goods to homeless veterans seeking to transition into a home; and

WHEREAS, The AMVETS National Spirit of America Youth Conference is held annually at the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, where students get to experience four days at the Freedoms Foundation's facility and are schooled in constitutional law with respect to the balance between liberty and security. These students participate in leadership building activities and visit sites in Philadelphia and Valley Forge. Team AMVETS sends about 60 students each year to the conference from California; and

WHEREAS, The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), a federal program that seeks to instill in students attending secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment, has faced funding challenges. Team AMVETS has, in recognition of the value of this program, sponsored JROTC scholarships, events, challenges, exhibitions, drills, and competitions to augment the program; and

WHEREAS, Team AMVETS is continually searching for new ways to serve veterans and their families, such as public policy and legislative advocacy related to, among others, employment and training, mandatory funding for government-provided health care, and other entitlement benefits, as well as participating in hospitalized veterans' visits, honor flights, Veterans Homes assistance, scouting, stand-downs, blood drives, and patriotic community programs; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That Team AMVETS, since 1945, has exhibited leadership, advocacy, and service for California's veterans and their families; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature commends AMVETS Department of California, also known as Team AMVETS, for providing benefits and services to their fellow veterans, as well as playing an important role in the civic life of their communities for 70 years; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.