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**AB-296 Task force: health of women veterans.** (2017-2018)

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ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 13, 2017

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 07, 2017

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 28, 2017

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 26, 2017

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 13, 2017

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2017–2018 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**NO. 296**

**Introduced by Assembly Members Cervantes and Mathis**  
**(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Quirk-Silva)**

**February 06, 2017**

An act to add and repeal Section 73.2 of the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 296, Cervantes. Task force: health of women veterans.

Existing law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs and requires the department to develop a transition assistance program to assist veterans successfully transition from military to civilian life and complement the transition program offered by the United States Department of Defense.

This bill would, until July 1, 2023, require the department to create a task force to study the health of California women veterans comprised of members with specified qualifications. The bill would prohibit task force members from receiving compensation or reimbursement of expenses for their service. The bill would require the task force to study the health care needs of women veterans in the state, as specified. The bill would also require the task force to submit 2 reports to the Governor and the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature that includes the task force's findings and recommendations. The bill would require the task force, when conducting its study and preparing its reports, to consult with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Department of Public Health, the Department of Managed Health Care, and representatives of county veterans service offices.

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

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

**SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Recently, each branch of the Armed Forces of the United States has opened to women combat positions that were previously closed to women.
- (b) According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the projected veterans population nationwide is approximately 23,000,000, with women making up an estimated 10 percent of that population.
- (c) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs estimates the percentage of female veterans will increase from approximately 9 percent in 2010 to approximately 18 percent in 2040.
- (d) Females comprise approximately 80,000 of the wartime veterans.
- (e) The number of women veterans will continue to increase due to ongoing combat operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan.
- (f) Women veterans often face unique challenges when transitioning from active duty to civilian life.
- (g) The challenging needs facing women veterans can often be overlooked when providing services to the very large veteran population.
- (h) Ensuring the availability of specialized services for physical and mental health, including treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, and alcohol and substance abuse tailored to the specific needs of women veterans is essential if California is to ensure that our returning veterans receive proper care.
- (i) Establishing a task force to study the health issues facing women veterans and making recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature will provide much needed information and insight.

**SEC. 2.** Section 73.2 is added to the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

**73.2.** (a) (1) The department shall create a task force to study the health of California women veterans.

(2) Each member of the task force shall be a veteran, have experience in providing treatment to veterans, or be a subject matter expert in health care or mental health care. Task force members shall be volunteers and shall not receive compensation or reimbursement of expenses for their services, including travel or other expenses incurred to participate in task force meetings or per diem.

(b) The task force shall study the health care needs of women veterans in the state, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- (1) The quality of, and access to, mental health services, including services and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.
- (2) Inpatient treatment availability.
- (3) The adequacy and availability of appropriate health care for women veterans within the federal health care system and within the state.
- (4) The adequacy and quality of, and access to, services providing for the identification and treatment of military sexual trauma, including sexual harassment or abuse.

(c) The task force shall submit a report, on or before January 1, 2021, and on or within six months before January 1, 2023, to the Governor and the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature that have jurisdiction over the department, including the findings of the task force's study and recommendations to improve provision of health care services to women veterans in the state.

(d) The task force, when conducting its study and preparing its reports, shall consult with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the State Department of Public Health, the Department of Managed Health Care, and representatives of county veterans service offices.

(e) This section shall become inoperative on July 1, 2023, and, as of January 1, 2024, is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2024, deletes or extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is

repealed.