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AB-558 State Bar of California: service members: legal services. (2019-2020)

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Date Published: 09/23/2019 09:00 PM

Assembly Bill No. 558

CHAPTER 303

An act to amend Section 6074 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to professions and vocations.

[Approved by Governor September 20, 2019. Filed with Secretary of State September 20, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 558, Petrie-Norris. State Bar of California: service members: legal services.

The State Bar Act provides for the licensure and regulation of attorneys by the State Bar of California, a public corporation, and requires that the State Bar administer a program to coordinate pro bono civil legal assistance to veterans and their families who otherwise cannot afford legal services, as specified. Existing law also requires the State Bar to engage with local bar associations, legal aid organizations, veterans service providers, and volunteer attorneys in providing these services.

This bill would instead require the State Bar to engage with military service providers, along with the other legal aid organizations, veteran service providers, and volunteer attorneys described above, to provide legal services to veterans and service members and their families who otherwise cannot afford legal services, and collaborate to improve access to and delivery of these services throughout the state. The bill would revise these provisions to include legislative findings on, among other things, the difficulty of veterans, service members, and their families in securing civil legal assistance.

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

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

SECTION 1. Section 6074 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:

6074. (a) The Legislature finds that securing civil legal assistance is difficult for veterans, service members, and their families who cannot afford legal services, for reasons unique to their military or veteran status. The Legislature further finds that the State Bar is uniquely suited to bring together organizations to help coordinate the delivery of civil legal services for veterans and service members and their families.

(b) The State Bar shall engage with local bar associations, legal aid organizations, veterans service providers, military service providers, and volunteer attorneys and encourage those groups to provide legal services to veterans and service members and their families who otherwise cannot afford legal services and collaborate, as appropriate, to improve access to and delivery of these services throughout the state.

(c) The State Bar shall provide resources and educational materials to attorneys and the public in order to support the purposes of this section by, among other things, doing the following:

(1) Compiling a list of local bar associations, legal aid organizations, veterans service providers, military service providers, and volunteer attorneys willing to provide pro bono legal services to veterans and service members, organized by city and county, and posting the list on its internet website.

(2) Conducting a statewide survey of programs that provide civil legal assistance to veterans in order to identify whether and where there is a need for legal advice clinics, publishing a report and recommendations based upon its findings no later than December 31, 2018, and posting the report on its internet website.