

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 2574**

---

---

**Introduced by Assembly Member Chávez**

February 19, 2016

---

---

An act to add Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 1168) to Part 3.5 of Division 2 of the Labor Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2574, as amended, Chávez. Veteran farmers and ranchers.

Existing law establishes the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and provides that the agency consists of, among other entities, the California Workforce Investment Board, the Employment Development Department, and the Employment Training Panel. Existing law establishes within state government a Department of Veterans Affairs *and a State Board of Food and Agriculture*. Existing law provides for a variety of state benefits to veterans, including those relating to educational assistance and farm and home purchases, as specified.

~~This bill would require the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to consult with other state agencies, including, but not limited to, the Employment Development Department, to mutually explore, in consultation with the United States Department of Agriculture, the potential availability of existing state employment training, outreach, and business development resources and other public or private sector resources, as specified, for purposes of identifying and leveraging federal veteran farmer or rancher as defined, assistance programs and resources~~

as contained in a certain federal law. The bill would also set forth related findings and declarations of the Legislature.

*This bill, by July 1, 2017, would require the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the State Board of Food and Agriculture, to develop a New Veteran Farmer and Rancher Outreach and Assistance Plan to disseminate information to veterans in California about, among other things, federal and state veteran agricultural education, training, and other assistance programs, as provided. The bill would authorize other public or private sector resources to be included in that dissemination if the resources meet certain requirements. The bill would also make findings and declarations in this regard.*

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 1168) is  
2 added to Part 3.5 of Division 2 of the Labor Code, to read:

3  
4 CHAPTER 9. VETERAN FARMERS OR RANCHERS  
5

6 1168. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

7 (a) The United States Census Bureau data for 2015 estimates  
8 an approximate global population totaling 7.25 billion people,  
9 requiring increased capacity to provide an adequate food supply  
10 while global resources for producing food are dwindling.

11 (b) The average age of farmers across the United States is on  
12 the rise. In ~~1978~~ 1978, 16.4 percent of principal farm operators  
13 were over 65 years of age and by ~~2012~~ 2012, *the average age*  
14 *of farmers* increased to 33 percent of principal farm operators being  
15 over 65 years of age.

16 (c) An 8-percent national decrease in the number of farmers  
17 and ranchers is expected to occur between the years 2008 and  
18 2018.

19 (d) The current social and educational infrastructure is  
20 inadequate to serve the needs of farmers and ranchers in California  
21 and elsewhere.

22 (e) According to the 2012 United States Department of  
23 Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture, 22 percent of all

1 farmers were beginning farmers in 2012, with minority and  
2 historically underrepresented communities constituting part of the  
3 continued growth among new and beginning farmers and ranchers.

4 (f) There is expanding recognition of new populations  
5 considering enterprises in farming and ranching that require a  
6 repositioning of classrooms and targeted educational resources  
7 outreach.

8 (g) According to the USDA, the sales value generated by  
9 California agriculture increased by 4.6 percent between the 2012  
10 and 2013 crop years. The state’s 77,900 farms and ranches received  
11 forty-six billion four hundred million dollars (\$46,400,000,000)  
12 for their outputs, ranking California as the nation’s largest in cash  
13 receipts, with the next leading states being Iowa and Nebraska.

14 (h) In response to the need to identify new population segments  
15 entering farming and ~~farm-related~~ *ranching-related* fields, the  
16 federal 2014 United States farm bill, known as the federal  
17 Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79), contained various  
18 landmark incentives to assist America’s veterans returning from  
19 military service to acquire skills needed to start and manage a farm  
20 and successfully enter the business of farming and ranching.  
21 Incentives include, but are not limited to, education and training,  
22 technical assistance, *rehabilitation*, and eligibility for USDA  
23 Microloans offering a simplified application process and favorable  
24 interest rates.

25 (i) More than six million veterans reside in rural America and  
26 two million veterans are residents of California.

27 ~~1168.1. It is the intent of the Legislature that this chapter~~  
28 ~~accomplish both of the following:~~

29 ~~(a) Recognizes the opportunities provided to California’s two~~  
30 ~~million veterans made available through landmark federal funding~~  
31 ~~and technical support for veteran farmers and ranchers through~~  
32 ~~the federal Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79).~~

33 ~~(b) Acknowledges further opportunities offered through state~~  
34 ~~and federal partnership to enhance the benefits to California’s~~  
35 ~~veterans resulting from the provisions of the Agricultural Act of~~  
36 ~~2014.~~

37 1168.2. For purposes of this chapter, “veteran farmer or  
38 rancher” means a farmer or rancher who meets both of the  
39 following: *following requirements:*

1 (a) Has not operated a farm or ranch or has not operated a farm  
2 or ranch for more than 10 years.

3 (b) Has served in the Armed Forces of the United States  
4 including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard  
5 of the United States, Reserves, Army National Guard, and Air  
6 National Guard.

7 ~~1168.3. (a) The Labor and Workforce Development Agency  
8 shall, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs,  
9 consult with other state agencies, including, but not limited to, the  
10 Employment Development Department, the Employment Training  
11 Panel, the California Workforce Development Board, and the State  
12 Board of Food and Agriculture, to mutually explore, in consultation  
13 with the United States Department of Agriculture, the potential  
14 availability of existing state employment training, outreach, and  
15 business development resources for purposes of identifying and  
16 leveraging federal veteran farmer assistance programs and  
17 resources as contained in the federal Agricultural Act of 2014  
18 (Public Law 113-79).~~

19 ~~(b) Resources identified shall be designed to assist the state's  
20 eligible organizations serving veterans or veteran applicants  
21 applying and qualifying for federal funding through the federal  
22 Agricultural Act of 2014.~~

23 ~~(c)~~  
24 ~~Other public or private sector resources offering guaranteed  
25 loans or other support for new veteran farmers or ranchers to assist  
26 in meeting their needs, including, but not limited to, farm  
27 ownership, operating loans, loans for land acquisition and  
28 improvement, and farm storage facilities, may also be identified,  
29 as appropriate, to support eligible organizations serving veterans  
30 or veteran applicants applying and qualifying for federal funding  
31 through the federal Agricultural Act of 2014.~~

32 *1168.3. (a) By July 1, 2017, the Labor and Workforce  
33 Development Agency, in consultation with the Department of  
34 Veterans Affairs and the State Board of Food and Agriculture,  
35 shall develop a New Veteran Farmer and Rancher Outreach and  
36 Assistance Plan to disseminate information, electronically and  
37 through America's Job Center of California locations and through  
38 any other already available means, to veterans in California about  
39 state veteran and agricultural education, training, and other  
40 assistance programs, federal veteran and agricultural education,*

1 *training, and other assistance programs and resources offered*  
2 *through the federal Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79)*  
3 *and any other subsequent federal acts related to agriculture.*

4 *(b) Other public or private sector resources may also be*  
5 *included in the dissemination described in subdivision (a) if these*  
6 *resources (1) offer guaranteed loans or other support to new*  
7 *veteran farmers or ranchers to assist in meeting their needs,*  
8 *including, but not limited to, loans for farm ownership through*  
9 *the Veterans' Farm and Home Purchase Act of 1974, which is*  
10 *known as the Cal-Vet loan program, as well as operating loans,*  
11 *loans for land acquisition and improvement and other needs, as*  
12 *appropriate, or (2) support eligible traditional and nontraditional*  
13 *organizations serving veterans, or veteran applicants applying*  
14 *and qualifying for federal funding authorized by the federal*  
15 *Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79) and any other*  
16 *subsequent federal agricultural Acts.*

O