

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 11, 2016

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 2574**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Chávez**  
*(Coauthor: Assembly Member Cooper)*

February 19, 2016

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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~~ *Department* 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, 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,~~ *a collaboration of state departments, including, but not limited to, the Department of Food and Agriculture, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and the Department of Veterans Affairs,* 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, 16.4 percent of principal farm operators were  
13 over 65 years of age and by 2012, the average age of farmers  
14 increased to 33 percent of principal farm operators being over 65  
15 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  
24 farmers were beginning farmers in 2012, with minority and  
25 historically underrepresented communities constituting part of the  
26 continued growth among new and beginning farmers and ranchers.

27 (f) There is expanding recognition of new populations  
28 considering enterprises in farming and ranching that require a

1 repositioning of classrooms and targeted educational resources  
2 outreach.

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

9 (h) In response to the need to identify new population segments  
10 entering farming and ranching-related fields, the federal 2014  
11 United States farm bill, known as the federal Agricultural Act of  
12 2014 (Public Law 113-79), contained various landmark incentives  
13 to assist America’s veterans returning from military service to  
14 acquire skills needed to start and manage a farm and successfully  
15 enter the business of farming and ranching. Incentives include, but  
16 are not limited to, education and training, technical assistance,  
17 rehabilitation, and eligibility for USDA Microloans offering a  
18 simplified application process and favorable interest rates.

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

21 1168.2. For purposes of this chapter, “veteran farmer or  
22 rancher” means a farmer or rancher who meets both of the  
23 following requirements:

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

26 (b) Has served in the Armed Forces of the United States  
27 including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard  
28 of the United States, Reserves, Army National Guard, and Air  
29 National Guard.

30 1168.3. (a) By July 1, 2017, ~~the Labor and Workforce~~  
31 ~~Development Agency, in consultation with the Department of~~  
32 ~~Veterans Affairs and the State Board of Food and Agriculture, a~~  
33 *collaboration of state departments, including, but not limited to,*  
34 *the Department of Food and Agriculture, the Labor and Workforce*  
35 *Development Agency, and the Department of Veterans Affairs,*  
36 shall develop a New Veteran Farmer and Rancher Outreach and  
37 Assistance Plan to disseminate information, electronically and  
38 through America’s Job Center of California locations and through  
39 any other already available means, to veterans in California about  
40 state veteran and agricultural education, training, and other

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

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

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