

AB 276 – No Hunger for Heroes Act

Assemblymember Ben Hueso

Summary

AB 276 eliminates barriers to CalFresh nutrition assistance for active-duty military families and veterans.

Background

Low-income military families and veterans in California confront hunger on a daily basis.

The families of enlisted personnel face food insecurity for several interrelated reasons. First, because of frequent moves, military spouses have trouble finding and keeping employment. Second, the way that the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) — the allotment given to uniformed service personnel to cover the costs of housing — is tallied and counted towards income eliminates options for families to stretch their budgets. If the BAH is paid directly to their housing provider, families cannot pinch on their housing to free money for other expenses. In addition, adjustments to the BAH for more expensive areas can paradoxically increase their taxes without covering more housing.

Veterans often struggle when adjusting to separation from the service as they transition to the civilian job-market, leading to delays and difficulties in finding and maintaining steady employment. This can be compounded by employer perceptions that disabilities can hinder their ability to perform work. The state leaves it optional for counties to require participation in an Employment and Training program (E&T) as a condition of eligibility for CalFresh benefits when unemployment is below the national average. This means that despite their prior service to our country, veterans can be required

to participate in a mandatory workfare program or other work activity in order to be eligible for CalFresh food assistance.

AB 276 Will:

- Allow veterans to participate in E & T programs on a voluntary basis but bans counties from requiring their participation as a condition of receiving CalFresh benefits.
- Require the state to ask the USDA to waive counting the BAH as income for calculating CalFresh eligibility and benefits for military households, returning to pre-2011 rules and greatly reducing the risk of food insecurity amongst the families of those who risk their lives to protect our republic.

Related Legislation

SB 43 Liu. Chapter 507, Statutes of 2011 – Eliminates employment-related sanctions for CalFresh when unemployment is high.

Sponsor

Hunger Advocacy Network (HAN)
San Diego Hunger Coalition (SDHC)

For More Information Call

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