



Summary of California's S.B. 156: A Bill Assisting Veterans and National Guard Members with Citizenship

California State Senator Joel Anderson (R-38) introduced [S.B. 156](#) on January 18, 2017. The bill would assist immigrant veterans in California and immigrant members of the California National Guard obtain U.S. citizenship. S.B. 156 [passed](#) the California State Senate unanimously on May 30, 2017 and after it was amended [passed](#) the California State Assembly on September 7, 2017. The California State Senate concurred with the Assembly's amendments on September 14.

Background

California law requires that the California Department of Veteran Affairs maintain a transition assistance program for veterans in California to assist them with information such as higher education benefits, vocational training assistance, small business resources and mental health resources and information. S.B. 156 would require this program to also include information about how to obtain U.S. citizenship. The bill would also modify the state's Military and Veterans Code to inform its National Guard immigrant members who are eligible to naturalize about resources and assistance to become U.S. citizens.

Currently, there are about [94,000 immigrant veterans](#) of the U.S. armed forces who have not naturalized. Because California is the state with the [higher number](#) of veterans in the U.S., with about 1.8 million, S.B. 156 is likely to have a significant impact on our country's immigrant veteran population by assisting them to become U.S. citizens.

What Does the Bill Do?

- **S.B. 156 helps inform immigrant veterans how to obtain U.S. citizenship.**
 - S.B. 156 requires the California Department of Veterans Affairs to amend its transition assistance program for veterans to include information for immigrant service members who are leaving military service in California or have been discharged from military service in California on how to become a U.S. citizen.
 - S.B. 156 also requires that the transition assistance program include information on where immigrant veterans can acquire state legal assistance to obtain U.S. citizenship.
- **S.B. 156 ensures members of the California National Guard can request help to obtain U.S. Citizenship.**
 - S.B. 156 requires the California National Guard to inform its immigrant members that it will assist them in acquiring U.S. citizenship as soon as they are eligible.
 - Once an immigrant member of the California National Guard requests assistance to obtain U.S. citizenship, S.B. 156 directs the California National Guard to assist the member in filing all forms and paperwork necessary to become a U.S. citizen.
- Once signed by Governor Jerry Brown (D-California) it will take effect immediately.