



## CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS

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### **SENATOR JACKSON AND ASSEMBLYMAN LEVINE TO RECEIVE LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) has selected State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) and Assemblyman Marc Levine (D-Marin County) as the recipients of the Motomu Nakasako Legislator of the Year awards for 2018. The awards will be presented at the CACVSO's Annual Sacramento Training Conference on February 27, 2019.

The Motomu Nakasako Award is named after "Mote" Nakasako, a Los Angeles County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) who was constantly involved in legislation to improve the lives of veterans at the local, state, and federal levels. He was a decorated member of the Army's 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, one of World War II's most decorated units. Mr. Nakasako joined the Army and volunteered for combat duty from the Heart Mountain Internment Camp in Wyoming.

#### **Senator Hannah Beth-Jackson (D-Santa Barbara)**



Senator Jackson is a former prosecutor and practicing attorney. She was elected to the California State Senate in 2012 to represent the 19th Senate District, which includes all of Santa Barbara County and western Ventura County. A graduate of Scripps College in Claremont, California, she went on to receive her law degree from Boston University Law School. From 1998 to 2004, she represented the 35th Assembly District in the State Assembly. In the Senate, she is currently chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Her husband, retired Superior Court Judge George Eskin, noticed that veterans had been coming before him in court for crimes which may have arisen as a result of PTSD, TBI, etc from their military service. He started the first Veterans Treatment Court in Santa Barbara County. Senator Jackson saw the success (0% recidivism) of this program and decided to author a bill regarding the arraignment process (SB 1110). Defendants are notified at arraignment, the first stage of the court process, that if they are current or former members of the military, they may be eligible for Veteran's Treatment Courts. SB 1110 was signed into law by the Governor.

In 2017, Senator Jackson authored SB 725; pre-trial diversion, which was signed into law by Governor Brown and was one of the top veterans priorities of that year. SB 725 clarifies that active duty military (and veterans) who suffer from military related traumatic mental health conditions and are before the court charged with DUIs, are and have always been eligible for military diversion under the Penal Code.

SB 1123, which was signed in to law in 2018, expands the state's Paid Family Leave policy to include families who must take time off to attend to situations arising out of a family member or loved one's status as a covered active duty member of the US Armed Forces. According to Senator Jackson, "when a member of the military is deployed overseas, life changes quickly, and it frequently sends family members on a scramble to make significant financial, legal, emotional and logistical preparations in advance of their loved one's departure. Even though no one is ill or injured, family members often need time away from work to handle these issues immediately".

Senator Jackson has also authored legislation designating portions of State Highway Route 101 in the Counties of Santa Barbara and Ventura for inclusion in the National Purple Heart Trail.

Kings County CVSO and CACVSO President Scott Holwell noted, “California’s veterans are fortunate that Senator Jackson has used her extensive legal expertise to guide complex legislation concerning veterans involved in the justice system through the legislative process. As a society, we are learning more about the effects of PTSD and TBI and how they can affect our veterans and Senator Jackson is turning that awareness into policy”.

### **Assemblyman Marc Levine (D-Marin County)**



Assemblyman Marc Levine was elected in November 2012 to represent the 10th Assembly District in Marin County and portions of Sonoma County. Prior to his time in the Legislature, he served on the San Rafael City Council. Before that, he developed award-winning technology for human rights organizations that is now in use globally. He earned his Master’s Degree in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey.

In 2014, Levine authored AB 2098, which was signed into law by the Governor. AB 2098 requires judges to consider military status and mental health problems outlined in 1170.9 as factor in favor of granting probation. It also requires courts to consider military status and service induced mental health problems as a mitigating factor for offenses with determinate sentencing. In crafting the bill, Levine noted that of the 2.6 million Americans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan as many as 20% have PTSD, with the unfortunate consequence of an increased propensity for criminal behavior.

Levine has authored many bills relating to suicide and mental illness. In 2017, he authored SB 665 which sought to expand the provisions of AB 2098 to incarcerated veterans who were convicted prior to that bill’s enactment in 2015. Levine was concerned that a veteran who was suffering from sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury, PTSD, substance abuse, or mental health problems as a result of his or her military service, would not receive the treatment and consideration extended to veterans in the prior legislation. The bill did not pass. Undeterred, Levine again introduced similar legislation in 2018 (AB 865), which he was able to push through the legislative process and the Governor signed the bill in to law in September 2018.

According to Ted Puntillo, Solano County CVSO and CACVSO Legislative Chair, “since Assemblyman Levine came to the Legislature in 2013, he has tackled the issues of mental health and its link to incarceration. He recognized that some veterans can become entangled in the criminal justice system as a result of trauma they experienced during their military service and pushed hard to enact policy to address the issue”.

### **About the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers**

The CACVSO was established in 1945 and aggressively seeks out veterans and their families to provide assistance and service. To meet this objective, the County Veterans Service Officer seeks to increase awareness of eligibility, entitlements, benefits programs, and services provided to veterans by Federal, State, and Local government agencies and service organizations. Services include comprehensive benefit counseling, claim development, and case management. Information is provided through referral services, public speaking, and media relations. CACVSO is a professional training and legislative organization comprising all County Veterans Service Offices throughout the state, dedicated to serving California’s 1.7 million veterans and their families.

The CACVSO, during fiscal year 2017-18, assisted California’s veterans in filing claims with the federal government, which resulted in payments of approximately \$505.5 million according to data released by the California Department of Veterans Affairs. More information about the CACVSOs can be viewed at:

<http://www.cacvso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CVSO-2018-Annual-Report.pdf>