



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
OFFICE OF PREVENTION SERVICES TASK FORCE**

PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED  
IN ADVANCE OF OCTOBER 27 MEETING

Contact information for the below correspondence has been redacted for privacy.  
If you are a Task Force, table member, or member of the public who would like to request this information, please contact Mark Lee at [mlee@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:mlee@ceo.lacounty.gov)

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From: Ms. Suttle  
Fri 9/29/2023 10:50 PM  
Subject: Corrected: Public Comment for September 29, 2023. Bill Proposal Idea – Exempt VA Disability Compensation From Being Calculated As Income

Good afternoon,

I wanted to elaborate on my Public Comment today during today's Prevention Services Task-Force meeting on September 29, 2023.

There was a slide presentations reflecting the factors that contribute to homelessness and then strategies to increase housing stability.

I strongly feel that issues surrounding families impacted by the counties Department of Children and Family Services contributes to homelessness. For example when cases are open by DCFS during that time period families may go through CFT (Child Family Team) meetings where they may discuss plans to help the family and reuniting families. However, even though the CFT meetings will go well and they talk about reuniting families they don't. Most of the time DCFS sends families back to Family Court with very restrictive orders leaving them on monitored visitation or not putting a visitation plan in place. Most of the time DCFS tells families they can get a visitation schedule when they go back to Family Court.

The Family Court costs money. Family court follows whatever DCFS left in place. The Family Court thinks that something is wrong if DCFS didn't take the parent off of monitored visitation and/or did not recommend a visitation schedule prior to closing the DCFS case. Even through the parent did everything they were suppose to do and all CFT meetings went extremely well with no complaints, DCFS continues to act in a cruel manner to close the case without putting things back to the way they were before DCFS got involved. So it's like everything a parent did with DCFS they have to do all over again with Family Court to prove themselves.

Monitored visitations may be free with DCFS when they decide to follow court orders and allow parents to visit their child but when they send families back to Family Court on monitored visitation parents can pay up to \$1,000 or more to visit with their children. Also, now in Family Court people have to pay for a Court Reporter to be present which could cost up to \$2,000.

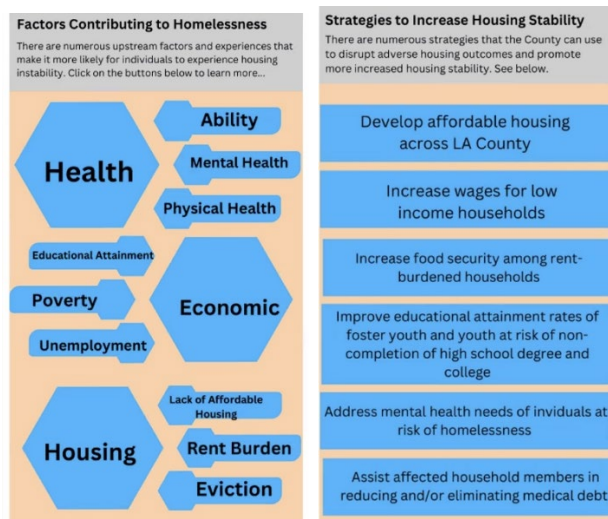
Veterans receiving tax exempt VA Disability Compensation have to report this to Family Court and it is counted as income therefor veterans become disqualified for a fee waiver and have to pay for everything and up to \$2,000 for a court reporter to be present in court. These factors and more are directly contributing to homelessness. Parents have to make a decision on whether to fight for their child/children or pay the rent. Pay to visit with their child or pay the rent. VA Disability Compensation can't cover both.

**Strategies to Increase Housing Stability for the Issues Mentioned Above:**

1. Direct DCFS to stop sending families back to Family Court with orders that cause them to pay for services.
2. Direct DCFS to stop sending families back to Family Court without reunification orders after they have successfully completed all DCFS requirements and had multiple successful CFT meetings.
3. Investigate DCFS cases improperly closed without family reunification.
4. Exempt VA Disability Compensation from being counted as income because when it is counted as income it prevents veterans from obtaining housing, legal aid, court fee waivers and prevents veterans from obtaining court reporters for court hearings.

I have attached a bill proposal Idea that I wrote to exempt VA Disability Compensation.

**ATTACHMENT SUBMITTED BY MS. SUTTLE: Legislative Proposal Idea**



Latia Suttle  
U.S. Army Veteran

**END OF PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE**

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL IDEA

Date: May 2023

### **1. What issue does this bill address?**

Veterans who have no criminal charges, who are unemployed and receiving VA Disability Compensation for their service connected illness or injuries in an amount greater than the Federal Poverty Level Income Guidelines do not qualify for housing assistance, legal aid/assistance, court fee waiver, nor court reporter for court hearings.

### **2. Why is current law insufficient to address the issue?**

When unemployed veterans who receive VA Disability Compensation greater than the Federal Poverty Level Income have cases in Family Law Court, the veteran has to pay full price for an attorney which is \$300 to \$500 per hour, after a \$10,000 or more retainer fee is paid by the veteran upfront. VA Disability Compensation is Tax Exempt.

In addition, the veteran may also have to pay for the following but not limited to the following items when cases are open in Family Court:

1. Monitored Visitation with their children: \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month
2. Evaluations that also include MMPI-2 exams: \$15,000 to \$30,000
3. Court Expert Witness Testimony: \$500 to \$1,000 per appearance
4. Court Bond with no Criminal Charges: \$10,000
5. Court Transcripts: \$60 to \$3,000
6. Classes and/or therapy sessions: \$40 to \$300 per sessions
7. Court Reporter for Hearings and/court Proceedings: \$2,000.

In addition to the Court Fees and Costs, the veteran still has to pay full price for rent while unemployed and only receiving VA Disability Compensation.

Los Angeles County has a current average rent of \$2,073, with a 3.9% vacancy rate, with the average rent predicted to rise to \$2,325 by 2023, with the vacancy rate holding steady. The Orange County average rent is predicted to rise from the current \$2,439 to \$2,849, with the vacancy rate rising from 2.1% to 3.7%.

In San Diego County, the current \$2,144 average rent will rise to \$2,492, according to the report, with the vacancy rate going from 2.5% to 3.4%.

The Inland Empire's average rent will rise from \$1,827 to \$2,068, with the vacancy rate holding steady at 1.9%, according to the report.

Veterans Access to Legal Organizations & Resources is non-existent when a veteran is unemployed and receiving VA Compensation. Legal Service Providers for Veterans count VA Compensation as income. Legal Service Providers for Veterans follow the Federal Poverty Level Income guidelines to determine eligibility for legal assistance .

The same issue exists when veterans apply for Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH). All Veterans do not qualify for HUD-VASH as the VA Disability Compensation is counted against that as well. Even if the veteran is allowed to go through the HUD-VASH process the Landlord will still put the "Market Rate" on the RTA packet causing the veteran to pay more for the housing than if the veteran didn't use the HUD VASH Voucher at all.

Legal Service Providers for Veterans follow the Federal Poverty Level Income guidelines to determine eligibility for legal aid services.

3. Recommended Solution: Exempt VA Disability Compensation when veterans are filing paperwork with any type of Court, applying for Legal Aid, requesting a Court Reporter, apply for HUD VASH and any type of housing assistance.

4. Studies, Reports, Statistics & Facts:

<https://www.ils.edu/media/loyolalawschool/newsroom/legalassistance/Valor%20Guide%20Los%20Angeles%20County%202012.pdf>.

**USC conducted Research to determine the Average Cost of Apartments in California:**

<https://abc7.com/amp/southern-california-rent-prices-apartments-in-los-angeles-usc/11220926/>

**VA Disability Benefits Are Tax Exempt:**

<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/file/personal/filing-situations/military.html>

**Va Compensation Rates:**

<https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates/veteran-rates/>

**Federal Income Poverty Level Guidelines:**

<https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/>

Sources:

1. [Video of Veterans Denied Housing on West Los Angeles VA Campus Due to Veteran Received VA Disability Compensation](#)
2. [Florida Shortage of Court Reporters](#)
3. [Texas Shortage of Court Reporters](#)
4. [Illinois Shortage of Court Reporters](#)
5. [New York Shortage on Court Reporters](#)
6. [Nationwide Shortage on Court Reporters](#)
7. [The Ducker Report: Nationwide Shortage](#)
8. [PUBLIC WILL HAVE TO FIND AND PAY FOR OWN COURT REPORTERS IN MANY LOS ANGELES CIVIL CASES](#)

5. Fiscal Impacts (How much will it cost? Is there General Fund money already allocated for this purpose? Will it cost local communities money to implement?)

6. Examples of other states that have addressed or resolved the problem successfully: **No other states have resolved the problem.**

7. Urgency (Is there a need for speed? How fast must this matter move?): **Urgent**

8. Prior or Similar Legislation in progress, or already passed in California (Bill number, author, year and final disposition): **SB 907 by Senator Bob Archuleta only assists Active Duty Military but not Veterans and Retirees. Wrote and called the Senators office in 2020 to address the issue and to possibly amend the bill or create a new one but his office never confirmed a meeting date nor addressed the issue with leaving out Veterans and Retirees.**

Potential Support: NAACP, NCNW

Latia Suttle  
CW2 (Ret), USA