

**By** the Committees on Fiscal Policy; and Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

594-04460-15

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1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to military and veteran support;  
3       amending s. 288.980, F.S.; revising the definition of  
4       the term "activities"; removing the requirement that  
5       an applicant to the Defense Infrastructure Grant  
6       Program provide matching funds of a certain amount;  
7       amending s. 292.10, F.S.; revising the categories of  
8       veterans eligible to receive assistance from local  
9       governing bodies; amending s. 455.213, F.S.; requiring  
10      the Department of Business and Professional Regulation  
11      to waive initial professional licensing fees for a  
12      veteran who has received a general discharge under  
13      honorable conditions; requiring the Department of  
14      Veterans' Affairs to create, in consultation with the  
15      Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, a  
16      section in the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide on  
17      agricultural farming opportunities for veterans;  
18      prescribing requirements; requiring the Department of  
19      Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Department  
20      of Military Affairs to create a pilot program for  
21      commercial driver license testing for qualified  
22      members of the Florida National Guard by a specified  
23      date; requiring that such testing be conducted at  
24      certain locations; providing for funding; providing an  
25      effective date.

26  
27   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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29       Section 1. Subsections (3) and (4) of section 288.980,

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30 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

31 288.980 Military base retention; legislative intent; grants  
32 program.—

33 (3) (a) The department is authorized to award grants on a  
34 competitive basis from any funds available to it to support  
35 activities related to the Florida Defense Reinvestment Grant  
36 Program and the Florida Defense Infrastructure Grant Program.

37 (b) As used in this section, the term "activities" ~~as used~~  
38 ~~in this section~~ means studies, presentations, analyses, plans,  
39 and modeling. For the purposes of the Florida Defense  
40 Reinvestment Grant Program, the term also includes, but is not  
41 limited to, economic development grants provided to businesses  
42 in defense-dependent communities. For the purposes of the  
43 Florida Defense Infrastructure Grant Program, the term  
44 "activities" also includes, but is not limited to, construction,  
45 land purchases, and easements. Staff salaries are not considered  
46 an "activity" for which grant funds may be awarded. Travel costs  
47 and costs incidental thereto incurred by a grant recipient shall  
48 be considered an "activity" for which grant funds may be  
49 awarded.

50 (c) The department shall require that an applicant:

51 1. Represent a local government with a military  
52 installation or military installations that could be adversely  
53 affected by federal actions.

54 2. ~~Agree to match at least 30 percent of any grant awarded.~~

55 ~~3.~~ Prepare a coordinated program or plan of action  
56 delineating how the eligible project will be administered and  
57 accomplished.

58 3.4. Provide documentation describing the potential for

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59 changes to the mission of a military installation located in the  
60 applicant's community and the potential impacts such changes  
61 will have on the applicant's community.

62 (d) In making grant awards the department shall consider,  
63 at a minimum, the following factors:

64 1. The relative value of the particular military  
65 installation in terms of its importance to the local and state  
66 economy relative to other military installations.

67 2. The potential job displacement within the local  
68 community should the mission of the military installation be  
69 changed.

70 3. The potential impact on industries and technologies  
71 which service the military installation.

72 (4) The Florida Defense Reinvestment Grant Program is  
73 established to respond to the need for this state to work in  
74 conjunction with defense-dependent communities in developing and  
75 implementing strategies and approaches that will help  
76 communities support the missions of military installations, and  
77 in developing and implementing alternative economic  
78 diversification strategies to transition from a defense economy  
79 to a nondefense economy. Eligible applicants include defense-  
80 dependent counties and cities, and local economic development  
81 councils located within such communities. The program shall be  
82 administered by the department and grant awards may be provided  
83 to support community-based activities that:

84 (a) Protect existing military installations;

85 (b) Diversify or grow the economy of a defense-dependent  
86 community; or

87 (c) Develop plans for the reuse of closed or realigned

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88 military installations, including any plans necessary for  
89 infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate reuse and  
90 related marketing activities.

91  
92 Applications for grants under this subsection must include a  
93 coordinated program of work or plan of action delineating how  
94 the eligible project will be administered and accomplished,  
95 which must include a plan for ensuring close cooperation between  
96 civilian and military authorities in the conduct of the funded  
97 activities and a plan for public involvement. An applicant must  
98 agree to match at least 30 percent of any grant awarded.

99 Section 2. Section 292.10, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
100 read:

101 292.10 Local governing bodies authorized to assist war  
102 veterans; powers.—The board of county commissioners of each  
103 county and the governing body of each city in the state are  
104 authorized hereby granted full and complete power and authority  
105 to aid and assist wherever practical and feasible the veterans,  
106 male and female, who have served in the Armed Forces of the  
107 United States in any war, and received an honorable discharge,  
108 or received a general discharge under honorable conditions from  
109 any branch of the military service of the United States, and  
110 their dependents, in presenting claims for and securing such  
111 compensation, hospitalization, education, loans, career  
112 training, and other benefits or privileges to which said  
113 veterans, or any of them, are or may become entitled under any  
114 federal or state law or regulation by reason of their service in  
115 the Armed Forces of the United States.

116 Section 3. Subsection (12) of section 455.213, Florida

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117 Statutes, is amended to read:

118 455.213 General licensing provisions.—

119 (12) The department shall waive the initial licensing fee,  
120 the initial application fee, and the initial unlicensed activity  
121 fee for a military veteran or his or her spouse at the time of  
122 discharge, if he or she applies to the department for a license,  
123 in a format prescribed by the department, within 60 months after  
124 the veteran is discharged from any branch of the United States  
125 Armed Forces. To qualify for this waiver, the veteran must have  
126 been honorably discharged or received a general discharge under  
127 honorable conditions.

128 Section 4. Agricultural farming opportunities for  
129 veterans.—

130 (1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs, through the  
131 direct-support organization established under s. 292.055,  
132 Florida Statutes, and in consultation with the Department of  
133 Agriculture and Consumer Services, shall include a section in  
134 the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide on agricultural farming  
135 opportunities in this state for veterans of the Armed Forces of  
136 the United States. The section must, at a minimum, include  
137 information on:

138 (a) Federal, state, and local agricultural farming  
139 programs, incentives, assistance, and grants that are available  
140 to veterans.

141 (b) Federal and state agricultural farming outreach and  
142 advocacy programs that are available to veterans.

143 (2) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall:

144 (a) Make the guides available to all military installations  
145 in this state.

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146 (b) Provide a concise description of the contents of the  
147 section and a link to the section on its website.

148 Section 5. No later than June 30, 2016, the Department of  
149 Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Department of Military  
150 Affairs shall jointly create a pilot program to provide  
151 opportunities for commercial driver license testing to qualified  
152 members of the Florida National Guard through the commercial  
153 driver license skills test waiver available under s. 322.12,  
154 Florida Statutes. Testing held pursuant to the pilot program  
155 must be conducted at a Florida National Guard armory, an Armed  
156 Forces Reserve Center, or the Camp Blanding Joint Training  
157 Center. The pilot program must be administered using existing  
158 funds appropriated to each department.

159 Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.