

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, SPACE, AND
DOMESTIC SECURITY**

**Senator Wright, Chair
Senator Torres, Vice Chair**

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, November 7, 2023

TIME: 8:30—10:15 a.m.

PLACE: 301 Senate Building

MEMBERS: Senator Wright, Chair; Senator Torres, Vice Chair; Senators Baxley, Collins, and Pizzo

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	Presentation by Joe Marino, Executive Director of Veterans Florida		Presented
2	Presentation by Commander Dennis Baker, Chairman of the Florida Veterans Foundation		Presented
Other Related Meeting Documents			



VETERANS FLORIDA

Your Pursuit • Our Power

Mission and Programs - Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Purpose

Veterans Florida is a non-profit created by the State of Florida in 2014 to help veterans fully transition to civilian life in the Sunshine State and to promote Florida as the most military and veteran-ready state in the country.

We serve:

- Separating or retiring servicemembers
- Recently transitioned veterans
- Florida National Guard and Reserves
- Spouses
- Veteran-owned businesses
- Employers seeking military talent

Administration

- Board of Directors, comprised of nine members appointed, three each, by the **Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker.**
- Administer the Florida Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Program under the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **Operations** (recurring) and **VETS Program** (nonrecurring) funding provided under state's Health and Human Services Budget.
- [s. 295.21](#), [s. 295.22](#), [s. 295.23](#)
- OPPAGA Review every three years.
- Based in Tallahassee, travel and serve all of Florida, and attend out-of-state on-base military job fairs.



Board of Directors



COL (Ret) USA, Robert Kirila,
Chair
House - 2d Term - July 2026



CPT (Ret) USN, Jeff Cathey,
Vice Chair
Governor - 1st Term - Oct 2026



BG (Ret) USA, Jerry Neff,
Treasurer
House - 2d Term - July 2026



Angela Drzewiecki,
Secretary
Senate - 2d Term - Mar 2027



Alan Suskey, USA
House - 1st Term - July 2026



President Pro Tem Garrett
Richter
Senate - 1st Term - June 2027



MCPO (Ret) USN, Mark
Harden
Governor - 1st Term - July 2024

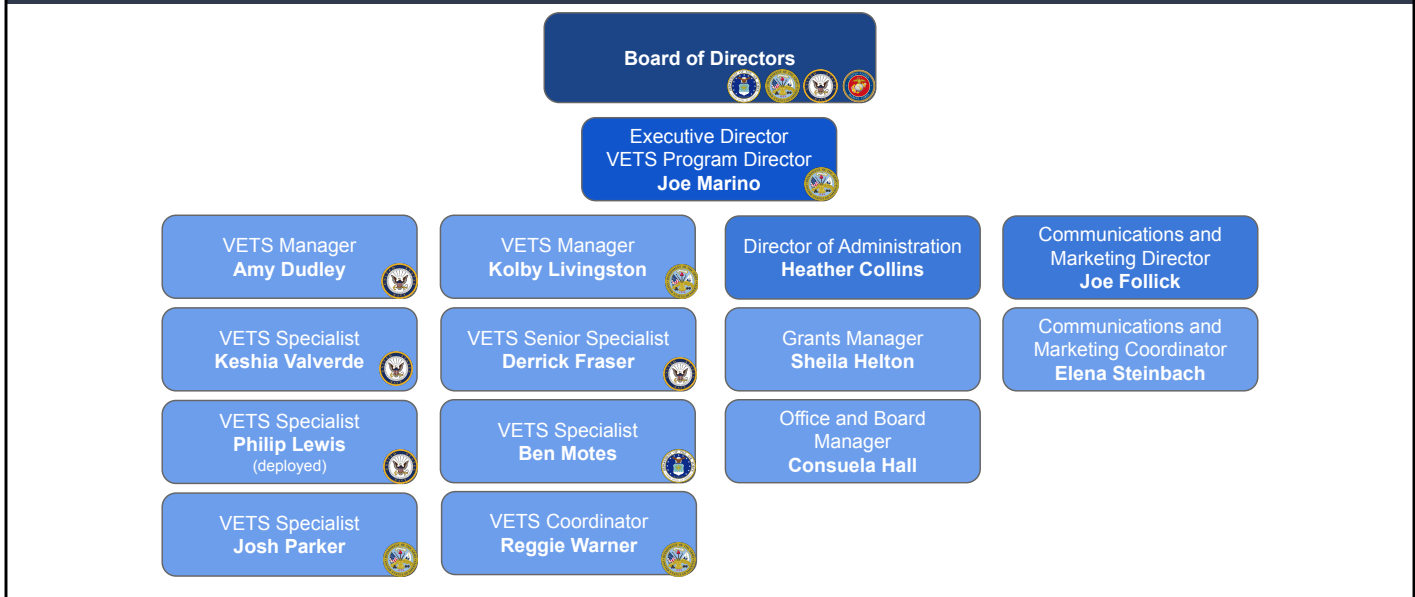


Lynda Weatherman
Senate - 2d Term - Mar 2027



Col (Ret) USMC, Rocky
McPherson (Chair Emeritus)
Governor - 2d Term - July 2024

Staff Organizational Chart Aug 2023



VETS Program Section 295.22, Florida Statutes

Statute	Services
Promote the state to veterans	Marketing with VISIT Florida
Veterans seeking employment	Career Services
Employers seeking veterans, including healthcare*	Workforce Recruiting
Workforce grant for employers	Workforce Training Grant
Veteran entrepreneur initiative	Entrepreneurship Program
Florida's principal DOD SkillBridge assistance organization	Florida SkillBridge Initiative**

* HB 139/SB 858 Torres; ** Florida SkillBridge Initiative passed and signed in 2021

Marketing

Target Audience

US Servicemembers 24 months prior to, and veterans within 36 months after, separating or retiring from the military

1,000,000

(200,000 separate each year across the country)

Geographically located at major and minor military installations in Florida and around the country, predominantly in the Southeast US, Texas, California, and East Coast US



VETS Program

Veteran Leads

Veteran Leads	
2022-23	2023-24
3,328	1,070 (41% outside FL)

	Open Lead Interests	Qualified Services
Career	48	1,592
SkillBridge	39	675
Entrepreneurship	49	2,526
Agriculture	17	292
Total	114	4,528

Top 10 Origin States	
Florida	637
Virginia	57
Texas	52
Georgia	48
California	22
North Carolina	16
AF Pacific	11
Hawaii	10
Maryland	9
AF Europe	9

VETS Program Partners

Partner Agreements	2022-23 Executed	2023-24 Executed
Workforce Training	45	27
Workforce Recruiting	76	45
SkillBridge Training	107	76
SkillBridge Recruiting	8	4
Agriculture (USDA/NIFA)	14	13
Entrepreneur Training	16	16
Total Agreement Packets	144	105

9

Marketing



Veterans Florida

Published by Hootsuite [?] · 21 hrs · 🌐

A high-growth economy, no taxes on income or military retirement, and beautiful weather all year. Create a profile to let us power your pursuit.

**HIGH SPEED,
LOW DRAG.**
Careers. Resumes. Placement.

VETERANS FLORIDA
Your Pursuit • Our Power

The approval of U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) does not imply or constitute DOD endorsement.



Veterans Florida

Published by Hootsuite [?] · January 3 at 6:00 PM · 🌐

The country's top schools? ✓
 Veteran resource centers on every campus? ✓
 Booming economy? ✓
 Florida's the top state for veterans and it's not even close.
<https://www.veteransflorida.org/veteran-r.../higher-education/>

**# 1 FOR
HIGHER
EDUCATION**

VETERANS FLORIDA
Your Pursuit • Our Power

VETSFL

10

Marketing

veteransflorida.org



CAREERS · ENTREPRENEURSHIP · AGRICULTURE · SKILLBRIDGE · RESOURCES

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVztNN6avgg&t=2s>



11

Marketing



12

Major Outreach Events

2022-23

- 13 Military/Veteran Job Fairs
 - Four CareerSource Paychecks for Patriots; four out of state
- Sponsored/attended DOD Warrior Games, Orlando, Sun n Fun Airshow, Lakeland, Air and Sea Show, Miami Beach, Gulf Coast Jam, PCB
 - FDVA Benefits Claims Examiner joins us
- Conducted June 2023 **Expo**, Tampa

2023-24

- 16 Military/Veteran Job Fairs
 - Six CareerSource Paychecks for Patriot; four out of state
- Jax Sea & Sky Show, Blue Angels Homecoming, Tampa Bay Airshow, Gulf Coast Jam
 - FDVA Benefits Claims Examiner joins us
- June 2024 **Expo**, Tampa



Career Services

Transition Services

- Inform about Florida industries and opportunities
- Activity checkpoints as retirement or separation approaches

Career Services

- Skills and career preference assessments
- Resume assistance
- Interview preparation

Job Placement

Coach veterans through start date at new job

Available to transitioning servicemembers, veterans, Guard/Reserve, and spouses



Workforce Services

Workforce Recruiting

- Seek to fill open jobs with military veterans
- Review resumes with military experience and make job match recommendations based on transferable skills

Workforce Training Grant

- 50% reimbursement for employer-paid, skills-based training for veteran employees, new or existing
- Up to \$8,000 per veteran
- Up to \$200,000 total per year
- High tech industries have preference

Available to veteran-ready Florida employers

Entrepreneurship

Workshops and Networking

- Topical and specific lessons for a group lasting a few hours
- Build their local business and mentorship network

Facilitated Cohorts

- In depth courses over several weeks
- 10-12 veteran businesses in Idea/Startup or Growth
- Pathway for moving business to next stage
- Mentoring provided

Co Working and Incubators

- Reserved memberships for veterans to take advantage of office and meeting space, local resources, and mentoring

Available to transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and Guard/Reserve - spouses may join

Entrepreneur

FY 2023-24 Partners

Partner	Location	Cohort	Workshop
ActionZone	Hillsborough	✓	✓
Beachworx	Walton		✓
FAVOB	Orange, Brevard, Hillsborough, Duval, Escambia		✓
Florida Atlantic University	Palm Beach	✓	✓
Florida Gulf Coast University	Lee	✓	✓
Julo Strategy	Miami & Panhandle	✓	
Nova Southeastern University	Broward	✓	✓
St Petersburg College	Pinellas	✓	
SWFL, Inc	Lee		✓
University of North Florida	Duval	✓	✓
Veterans Entrepreneurship Initiative (VEI)	Orange	✓	✓

17

Entrepreneur

FY 2023-24 Partners - CoWorking

Coworking Space	Location	Coworking Space	Location
COhatch Lakeland	Polk	Beachworx	Walton
Expansive	Orange	Domi Station	Leon
Station House	Pinellas	Groundswell	Brevard
WeWork	Miami-Dade and Hillsborough (2)		

18

Agriculture

IFAS Internship

- Six months paid fellowship at a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Research Center
- Learn skills in various Florida agricultural areas from farming to ranching

Job Placement

Place into full-time work in agriculture industry

Available to transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and Guard/Reserve. Veterans and Guard/Reserve access program through our USDA funded **AgVets** three year grant. Transitioning servicemembers access program through our DoD **SkillBridge** certification.



Agriculture FY 2023-24 Partners

Research and Education Center	Location	Research and Education Center	Location
Fort Lauderdale REC	Broward	North Florida REC - Marianna (NEW)	Jackson
Gulf Coast REC	Hillsborough	Indian River REC	St. Lucie
Plant Science REC (NEW)	Marion	Southwest Florida REC	Collier
Honey Bee Ext Lab (NEW)	Alachua	Tropical REC	Miami-Dade
Everglades REC (NEW)	Palm Beach	Tropical Aquaculture Lab	Hillsborough
Mid-Florida REC	Orange	West Florida REC	Santa Rosa
North Florida REC - Quincy & Suwannee Valley	Gadsden & Suwannee	Range Cattle REC	Hardee

SkillBridge

veteransflorida.org

A Department of Defense Program which enables transitioning servicemembers:

- With less than 6 months until separation or retirement.
- To gain workforce training at employer or industry partner under an apprenticeship or internship in lieu of their military duties.
- Retain their full DoD pay and benefits.

Employers do not provide salary or benefits for the servicemember during the training.

<https://dodSkillBridge.usalearning.gov>

21

SkillBridge

Notable Employers & Industries

veteransflorida.org

<p>Florida Departments of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Affairs • Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (Florida Highway Patrol) • Commerce and CareerSource • Children and Families Management Services • Revenue • Fish and Wildlife Commission 	<p>County Sheriffs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alachua • Broward • Marion • Okaloosa • Palm Beach • Santa Rosa • Seminole • Lake 	<p>Police Departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gainesville • Longwood • Pensacola • Port Orange <p>Municipal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alachua County • Bay County • Walton County • Hillsborough Aviation Authority
DOD Air Force Unit		
Aviation, pilots, maintenance	Commercial Construction	Information and Technology
Manufacturing	Aerospace, Launch Services	Marine Electronics, Shipbuilding and Repair

22

Government Relations

Performance and Legislative Budget Request (FDVA-HHSA)

Placed or Trained	Career	SkillBridge	Workforce	Agriculture	Entrepreneur	Ops Approps	VETS Approps
2022-23	22	96*	254	13	173** / 1441***	\$400,000 Recur	\$2,000,000 Nonrecur
2023-24	50	180	275	2	200 / 1500	\$400,000 Recur	\$2,000,000 Nonrecur
2024-25	100	300	300	10	300 / 2000	\$400,000 Recur LBR: +\$50,000	LBR: \$2,000,000 Recur \$500,000 Nonrecur

- LBR seeks \$50,000 increase to Operations recurring for inflation protection, expand External Affairs staffing and Administrative support
- Seeks VETS \$2,000,000 to recurring from nonrecurring: eight-year history of success; integral part of state's workforce development and attracts talent to the state; launching more veteran small businesses through more training partners
- Seeks VETS \$500,000 additional nonrecurring: support increased SkillBridge and entrepreneur demand; veterans ag training

2023-24 and 2024-25 are projections; * 70% from out of state; ** structured training cohorts in startup or growth; *** workshops, networking, coworking

23

Government Relations

Policy Priority (2024-25)

Modernization Bill

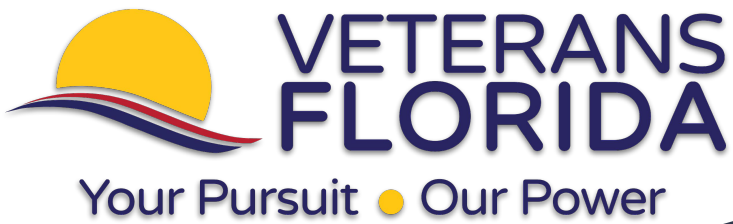
- Remove and replace obsolete language from 2014 statute
- Clarify definitions focusing services on high tech industries
- Update to include state-level agency partner collaboration

24

Questions?

25

Mission and Programs



veteransflorida.org

Copies of these slides and additional materials may be requested and obtained by emailing marino@veteransflorida.org

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

Briefing

11/7/2023
Meeting Date

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic

Mil/Vet/Space
Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Joe Marino

Phone 850 322 2093

Address 930 Thomasville Rd #100
Street

Email jmarino@veteransflorida.org

Tall FL 32303
City State Zip

Speaking: For Against Information OR Waive Speaking: In Support Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

I am appearing without compensation or sponsorship.

I am a registered lobbyist, representing:

Florida is for Veterans

I am not a lobbyist, but received something of value for my appearance (travel, meals, lodging, etc.), sponsored by:

While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (08/10/2021)



FLORIDA VETERANS

— F O U N D A T I O N —

NO FLORIDA VETERAN LEFT BEHIND

November 2023

**Senate Military and Veterans Affairs,
Space, and Domestic Security Committee**

- Established by the Florida Legislature in 2008
- Direct Support Organization of Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA)
 - 501(C)(3) Nonprofit
- *Independent Audit* ▪ *FDVA statutory oversight* ▪ *990 forms are on HelpFIVets.org.*
- *FVF is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Resources.*



- Dynamic, Lean Staff who Excel in Connecting and Collaborating
- Educating and Sharing Across the State
- Starting Organization for;
 - Free Veterans Legal Helpline
 - Free Veterans Transportation (DAV)
 - Free Dental Care (FL Veteran Nursing Homes)
 - Five Star Veterans Center
 - North FL Women Veterans Center
 - Ashley's Cottage
- Through Legislative Support
 - Veterans in Crisis Support (Financial, Disaster Relief)
 - Governor's Veterans Suicide Prevention

NO FLORIDA VETERAN LEFT BEHIND

- 67 Counties - 172 CVSO's
- 8 District Directors Throughout Florida

- Partnerships -
 - Florida Veteran's Council
 - Crisis Center Tampa Bay
 - NE FL Women Veterans
 - 5 Star Veteran's Center Jacksonville
 - Heroes' Mile, Deltona
 - Bay Area Legal Tampa Free Veteran Legal Helpline
 - Veteran's Treatment Court
 - Project Vet Relief
 - Florida Association of Managing Entities (FAME) Rural and Low-Income Mental Health



- Gadsden Flag License Plate –
 - 90% direct to Veterans.
 - 10% for Promotion
- Veterans Dental
- Veterans Transportation
- Ashley's Cottage
- Mission of Mercy
- Hiring for Healthcare Professionals
- Fisher House Support
- Operation Outdoor Freedom Support
- Florida Veterans Benefits Guides

Current Programs

- Mission of Mercy - Lakeland, FL May 30th - June 1st 2024
- FL Veteran Nursing Home - Dental Program 8 Homes 1 Domiciliary
- Project Vet Relief- Statewide Program American Legion
- Suicide Prevention Program - Through Quest Advertising
- Training Hope Navigators
- Bridging the Future with Current Data and Outreach
- Toxic Exposure Town Halls / Pact Act – Molina Health
- Rural Area Initiative -5 Counties, 20K Mailed, Panhandle, 1 Return
 - Bay, Okaloosa, Walton, Escambia, Santa Rosa

Dear Veterans and Veteran Supporters of Bay,

You are not alone and we stand with you! If you're dealing with suicidal thoughts, it's time to reach out for help. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. You've already shown courage in your service, and now it's time to prioritize your well-being.

Visit helpflvets.org or scan the QR code below to see what resources are available to our Florida Veterans.



FLORIDA
Governor's
Challenge
Preventing Suicide Among Service
Members, Veterans & Their Families
www.SaveFLVets.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TAMPA, FL
PERMIT #78



Veteran Support Hotlines



988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline: Call 988 and press 1 or reach out via chat.



Florida Veterans Support Line: Call 1-844-MyFLVet (693-5838) to connect.



Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor.

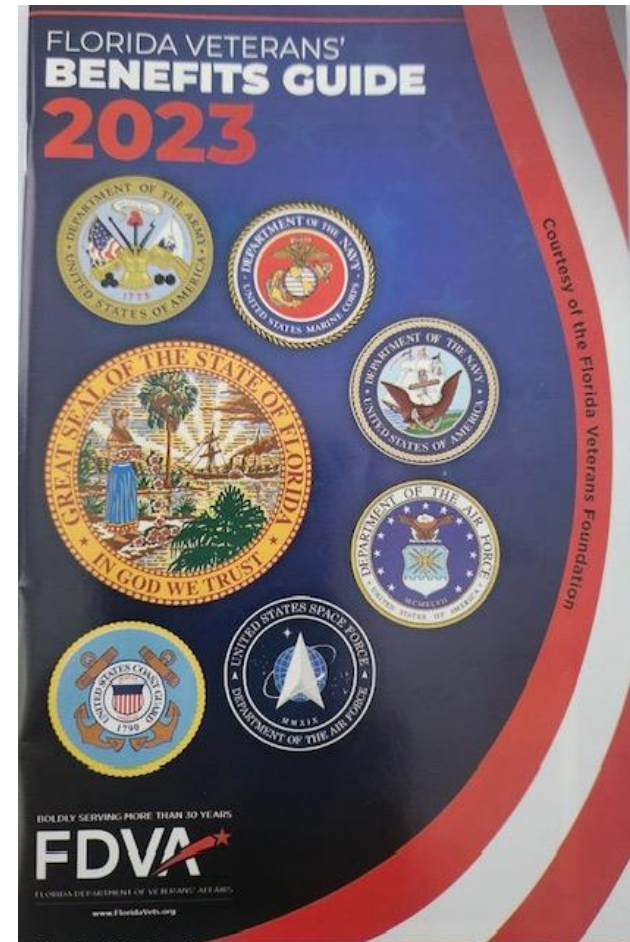


Bay Area Legal Services: Call (800) 625-2257 to apply for services.



Supporting the **Gadsden Flag License Plate** means supporting our Florida Veterans. Get your plate today at your local tax collector!

VA Survivors & Burial Benefits Kit



FDVA / FVF Teaming

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

11/7/23

Meeting Date

MILITARY & VETERANS AFFAIRS

Committee

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name DENNIS O. BAKER

Phone 850-545-6668

Address 3260 ROB IDO LAFFITE DR.

Email DENNIS.BAKER@FOVA.FL.GOV

Street

TALLAHASSEE, FL. 32312

City

State

Zip

Speaking: For Against Information **OR** Waive Speaking: In Support Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

I am appearing without compensation or sponsorship.

I am a registered lobbyist, representing:

I am not a lobbyist, but received something of value for my appearance (travel, meals, lodging, etc.), sponsored by:

While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (08/10/2021)

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: SB 301

Case No.:

Type:

Caption: Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

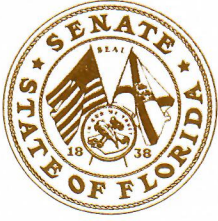
Judge:

Started: 11/7/2023 8:32:15 AM

Ends: 11/7/2023 9:30:51 AM

Length: 00:58:37

8:32:20 AM	Roll Call/Quorum
8:32:34 AM	Pledge of Allegiance
8:32:34 AM	Chair Wright opening remarks
8:32:39 AM	Tab 2 Presentation by Commander Dennis Baker, Chairman of the Florida Veterans Foundation
8:32:45 AM	Chair Wright
8:33:06 AM	Commander Baker
8:51:07 AM	Senator Torres
8:51:19 AM	Commander Baker
8:52:53 AM	Chair Wright
8:54:56 AM	Senator Torres
8:55:00 AM	Chair Wright
8:55:14 AM	Commander Baker
8:55:22 AM	Chair Wright
8:56:21 AM	Tab 1 Presentation by Joe Marino, Executive Director of Veterans Florida
8:57:01 AM	Mr. Marino
9:24:44 AM	Chair Wright
9:25:45 AM	Questions
9:25:49 AM	Chair Wright
9:25:55 AM	Mr. Marino
9:27:07 AM	Chair Wright
9:27:12 AM	Mr. Marino
9:27:57 AM	Chair Wright
9:28:06 AM	Commander Baker
9:28:11 AM	Chair Wright
9:28:17 AM	Mr. Marino
9:28:40 AM	Chair Wright
9:29:00 AM	Commander Baker
9:30:17 AM	Chair Wright
9:30:20 AM	Commander Baker
9:30:22 AM	Chair Wright
9:30:32 AM	Senator Torres moves to adjourn
9:30:38 AM	Meeting adjourned



THE FLORIDA SENATE

SENATOR JASON W.B. PIZZO

DISTRICT OFFICE:

3475 Sheridan Street
Suite 211
Hollywood, FL 33021
Phone: 954.893.5045
pizzo.jason@flsenate.gov

CAPITOL OFFICE:

222 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Phone: 850.487.5037

STAFF:

Teri Cariota
Chief Legislative Aide
cariota.teri@flsenate.gov

Olivia Callari
District Legislative Aide
callari.olivia@flsenate.gov

Joanne Alvarez
District Legislative Aide
alvarez.joanne@flsenate.gov

COMMITTEES:

Joint Legislative Auditing,
Alternating Chair

Appropriations

Appropriations Committee
on Criminal & Civil Justice

Community Affairs

Criminal Justice

Finance & Tax

Military & Veterans Affairs,
Space, and Domestic
Security

Select Committee on
Resiliency, *Vice Chair*

KATHLEEN PASSIDOMO
President of the Senate

DENNIS BAXLEY
President Pro Tempore

November 7, 2023

Chair Tom Wright
Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs,
Space, and Domestic Security
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Chair Wright,

Please excuse my absence from the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security this morning, November 7, 2023.

Sincerely,

Jason W.B. Pizzo

cc: Tim Proctor, Staff Director
Lois Graham, Committee Administrative Assistant
Maggie Gerson, Senate Democratic Office Staff Director
Megan Ramba, Senate President's Office