

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

CS/CS/HB 1329 — Veterans

by State Affairs Committee; Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee; and Reps. Redondo, Alvarez, and others (CS/SB 408 by Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development and Senators Burgess, Perry, and Collins)

The bill designates the Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) to serve as the initial point of military transition assistance and to conduct marketing and outreach to its target market. U.S. Armed Forces servicemembers with 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, members of the Florida National Guard or reserve, and their spouses or surviving spouses who have not remarried are the target market.

The bill increases Veterans Florida's board of directors from 9 to 11 members, with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appointing one from their presiding body to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members.

The amendment revises the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to:

- Match the target market with target and secondary industry businesses and grants;
- Encourage entrepreneurship and grow veteran-owned small businesses;
- Authorize prioritizing of grant funds for training, certification, and licenses;
- Provide that a participating business may also receive a grant under any state program; and
- Authorize Veterans Florida to assist state agencies in recruiting veteran talent into their workforce and maximize veteran access to benefits, services, training, and education.

The bill also:

- Creates a fee exemption on hunting and fishing license fees for honorably discharged veterans with a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or more.
- Increases the membership of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries from 16 to 18 members to add two members who are veterans who have or have had brain injuries, or their family members.
- Requires public school instruction on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.
- Creates and funds the Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans' History Program to record the stories of Florida's veterans and preserve them for future generations, and appropriates one position and \$91,207 in recurring funds to implement and administer the program.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-0

