

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

CS/HB 171 — Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel

by Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee; and Reps. Ponder, Hattersley, and others (CS/SB 372 by Education Committee and Senators Lee, Cruz, Harrell, Broxson, Perry, and Stewart)

This bill requires the Florida Department of Education to establish a uniform process for awarding postsecondary college and career education credit for training and education acquired in the military. The Board of Governors of the State University System and the State Board of Education will adopt regulations and rules, respectively, in consultation with the state Department of Veterans' Affairs, to create this process.

The bill requires the Articulation Coordinating Committee (committee) to convene a 13-member workgroup by July 15, 2020, to select postsecondary course equivalencies and the minimum postsecondary credit or career education clock hours to be awarded for courses taken and occupations held by servicemembers.

The bill provides for the following membership of the workgroup: 1 member who is the chair of the Articulation Coordinating Committee, or a designee; 4 members who represent academic affairs administrators and faculty from state universities, appointed by the chair of the Board of Governors; 4 members who represent academic affairs administrators and faculty from Florida College System institutions, appointed by the chair of the State Board of Education; 2 members who are faculty from career centers, appointed by the State Board of Education; and 2 members who are veterans, appointed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

After meeting, the workgroup must provide recommendations to the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education by December 1, 2020, for approval at the next meeting of each board. After approval of the recommendations, the committee will approve a prioritized list, to be annually updated, of equivalencies and credit or clock hours to be awarded for courses taken and occupations held by servicemembers.

Awarded credit and clock hours are transferrable to other state universities, Florida College System institutions, and career centers.

The bill also provides for a waiver of fees for transcript requests by active duty servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans, and their spouses and dependents. Specifically, state universities, Florida College System institutions, career centers operated by a school district, and charter technical career centers are required to waive the fee on transcripts.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 111-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

CS/CS/HB 205 — Unlawful Use of Uniforms, Medals, or Insignia

by Criminal Justice Subcommittee; Local, Federal and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee; and Reps. Avila, Sabatini, and others (CS/SB 352 by Military and Veterans Affairs and Space Committee and Senators Hutson and Diaz)

This bill revises the existing prohibition on a person misrepresenting himself or herself as a member or veteran of the United States Armed Forces. The law that this bill amends forbids misrepresentation while a person is soliciting for charitable contributions or seeking a material gain.

The bill specifies that the material gain prohibited include obtaining paid employment or public office.

As in existing law, a person who violates these provisions commits a third-degree felony, punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect October 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

SB 294 — Crimes Against Veterans

by Senators Wright and Baxley

This bill creates the Florida Veterans Protection Act, which amends the White Collar Crime Victim Protection Act. The Florida Veterans Protection Act provides that a person commits an aggravated white collar crime if he or she obtains or attempts to obtain \$50,000 or more by committing at least two associated white collar crimes against 10 or more veterans.

A person who violates this act commits a first degree felony ranked at a level 9 out of 10 possible levels for incarceration purposes on the offense severity ranking chart of the Criminal Punishment Code. The person must also pay all court costs and restitution to each victim. Additionally, the court may order payment of a fine of \$500,000 or double the value of the pecuniary gain or loss, whichever is greater.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect October 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 116-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

CS/HB 717 — Space Florida Financing

by Commerce Committee and Rep. Sirois (CS/CS/SB 1070 by Military and Veterans Affairs and Space Committee; and Appropriations Committee; and Senators Wright and Albritton)

The bill revises the authority of Space Florida to issue bonds. Space Florida is authorized to issue revenue bonds or any other type of debt, including bank loans. The bill repeals both the requirement that Space Florida notify the presiding officers and appropriations chairs of both houses of the Legislature before presenting a bond proposal to the Governor and Cabinet and the requirement for the Governor and Cabinet to approve the bond's issuance.

The bill clarifies that Space Florida is subject to the minimum credit-worthiness requirements in s. 189.051, F.S., and authorizes the entity to validate its bonds pursuant to ch. 75, F.S., which provides generally for government-issued bond validation. The term for which Space Florida may issue a bond is shortened to 30 years from 40 years.

Conforming changes to bond references are made to relevant sections of ch. 331, F.S., and statutes that address pledging the full faith and credit of Space Florida, the issuance of bond anticipation notes, and short-term borrowing are repealed.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 115-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

HJR 877 — Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities

by Rep. Killebrew and others (SJR 1076 by Senators Wright and Albritton)

This Joint Resolution proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to allow a homestead property tax discount for disabled veterans to transfer to a veteran's surviving spouse upon the death of the veteran, provided the veteran had received the discount.

The discount on homestead property taxes is currently available for veterans aged 65 or older who have permanent, combat-related disabilities.

If approved by the voters, these provisions take effect January 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 115-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

HB 879 — Surviving Spouse Ad Valorem Tax Reduction

by Rep. Killebrew and others (CS/SB 1074 by Military and Veterans Affairs and Space Committee and Senators Wright and Albritton)

This bill is the implementing legislation for House Joint Resolution 877, which allows the homestead property tax discount for disabled veterans to transfer to a veteran's surviving spouse upon the death of the veteran, provided the veteran had received the discount.

The discount on homestead property taxes is currently available for veterans aged 65 or older who have permanent, combat-related disabilities.

If approved by the voters, these provisions take effect January 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0