

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

CS/HB 45 — Educational Opportunities for Disabled Veterans

by Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee and Reps. Morales, Benjamin, and others (CS/SB 554 by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senators Cruz, Rodrigues, Taddeo, and Stewart)

The bill provides an education benefit to certain veterans who are residents and enrolled in a program of education approved by the federal educational assistance program. The bill would add a state award to what is provided in federal law for educational benefits to achieve a 100 percent award for tuition and fees. To qualify, the veteran must have been:

- Determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent for compensation;
- Determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and have received disability retirement pay from a branch of the United States Armed Services; or
- Issued a valid identification card by the state Department of Veterans' Affairs which identifies the veteran as either having a 100 percent, service-connected permanent and total disability rating for compensation or who has a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and receives disability retirement pay from a branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, a disabled veteran who receives a tuition benefit to attend a state university, a Florida College System institution, a career center operated by a school district, or a charter technical career center under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, but who does not qualify for the 100 percent eligibility tier federally, is eligible for tuition and fees. The monetary award is equal to the difference between the portion of tuition and fees authorized under federal law and the full amount of tuition and fees charged by the institution attended. The bill specifies that the amount awarded by the state is not to be determined until after federal benefits are applied.

Each educational institution included in this bill must annually report to the Board of Governors of the State University System and the State Board of Education, as appropriate, the number and value of all fee waivers granted.

The bill provides that a disabled veteran who receives this award must remain in compliance with other statutory requirements applying to veterans and other students who receive educational benefits.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.
Vote: Senate 38-0; House 115-0

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

CS/SB 254 — Religious Institutions

by Rules Committee and Senators Brodeur, Perry, and Rodrigues

The bill creates s. 252.64, F.S., for the protection of religious institutions when an emergency order has been issued.

CS/SB 254 includes:

- For the application of emergency orders, CS/SB 254 defines a “religious institution” in the same manner as under s. 496.404, F.S.
- An emergency order issued under this part cannot directly or indirectly prohibit religious services or activities.
- However, a general provision in an emergency order which applies uniformly to all entities in the jurisdiction may be applied to a religious institution if:
 - The provision is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and
 - The provision is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 31-3; House 88-29

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

CS/SB 430 — Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Wright

The bill reenacts provisions of law establishing and implementing the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (Compact) and provides for future legislative review and repeal of the Compact on July 1, 2025. As a member of the Compact, the state has an established State Council. Participation in the Compact enables member states to address educational transition issues faced by military families and their students as they transfer from a state or school district pursuant to official military orders.

The bill also provides for the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each to select a member of the State Council, increasing the membership from seven to eight members.

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

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 112-0

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

CS/SB 438 — United States Space Force

by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Burgess

The bill updates definitions and references in the Florida Statutes to include the United States Space Force, the newest branch of the United States Armed Forces. In several statutory references, the United States Space Force is added to existing illustrative lists of entities which are components of the United States Armed Forces.

CS/SB 438 also updates the names of two United States Space Force facilities which are located in Florida and which now operate as Space Launch Delta 45, a Space Force operational unit. The two facilities which are renamed are Patrick Space Force Base, previously known as Patrick Air Force Base and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, previously known as Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022, except where otherwise provided.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-0

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

SB 562 — Military Occupational Licensure

by Senator Cruz

The bill requires the professional licensing boards of the Departments of Business of Professional Regulation (DBPR) and Health (DOH), or the DBPR or DOH where there is no board, to issue permanent occupational licenses to the spouses of active duty members of the Armed Forces of the United States within 7 days of receipt of a completed application that includes all required documentation. The required application fee for such licenses is also waived.

Temporary occupational licenses issued by the DBPR or DOH and its licensing boards are ended as processing will be expedited for active duty military members and their spouses eliminating the need for such licenses.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 112-0

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

CS/SB 896 — Educator Certification Pathways for Veterans

by Education Committee; and Senators Burgess and Perry

The bill provides an alternative pathway for veterans seeking subject area certification by removing the requirement for a baccalaureate degree for issuance of their temporary educator certificate if certain requirements are met.

To qualify for a temporary certificate under this pathway, the applicant must:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- File an affidavit in which the applicant subscribes to and agrees to uphold the principles of the state and federal Constitutions;
- Submit to criminal background screening;
- Competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of an educator; and
- Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter pursuant to state board rule.

The exception for a bachelor's degree under this provision applies only to subject area specializations that require a bachelor's degree for issuance of a temporary certificate. To qualify for the exception, the applicant, must in addition to the qualifications above, also document:

- Completion of at least 48 months of active duty military service with an honorable discharge or medical separation; and
- Completion of at least 60 college credits with a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 grade scale, as provided by one or more accredited institutions of higher learning or a non-accredited institution of higher learning that the Department of Education (DOE) has identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree or higher.

While teaching under a temporary certificate, the person must be assigned a teacher mentor for a minimum of 2 school years after commencing employment. The teacher mentor must hold a valid professional teaching certificate, have at least 3 years of teaching experience, and have earned an effective or highly effective performance evaluation rating.

The issuance of a temporary certificate under this pathway is valid for five school fiscal years and is nonrenewable.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 111-0

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

SB 1360 — Governor's Medal of Freedom

by Senators Wright and Perry

The bill saves from repeal the authority for the Governor's Medal of Freedom. The Governor's Medal of Freedom provision authorizes the Governor to present a medal of freedom to a person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to the citizens of the state, its culture, or other significant public or private endeavor.

The repeal date of July 1, 2022, is removed from statute.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 36-1; House 116-0

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

SB 1712 — Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program

by Senators Burgess and Rodrigues

The bill requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs (department) to establish and oversee the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program (program). The purpose of the program is to provide veteran suicide prevention training and certification to agency claims examiners and county and city veteran service officers. To provide training curriculum, the department will contract with an organization established in developing and implementing veteran-relevant and evidence-based suicide prevention training.

Training topics include identifying indicators of elevated suicide risk and providing emergency crisis referrals for veterans in emotional or psychological distress.

The bill requires the department to adopt rules, and submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by June 30 of each year. The report will provide information on the pilot program and recommend whether changes should be made to increase effectiveness. In the report to be submitted by June 30, 2026, the department will recommend whether the pilot program should be continued.

A non-recurring appropriation of \$500,000 is provided in the bill.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-0

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

CS/HB 7055 — Cybersecurity

by State Affairs Committee; State Administration and Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; Reps. Giallombardo, Fischer, and others (CS/CS/SB 1670 by Appropriations Committee; Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; and Senator Hutson)

The bill amends the state's Cybersecurity Act that requires the Florida Digital Service (FLDS) and the heads of state agencies to meet certain requirements to enhance the cybersecurity of state agencies. Currently, state agencies must provide cybersecurity training to their employees, report cybersecurity incidents, and adopt cybersecurity standards. However, there are no such requirements for local governments.

Current law does not specifically address ransomware, which is a form of malware designed to encrypt files on a device, rendering any files unusable. Malicious actors then demand ransom in exchange for decryption.

CS/HB 7055 prohibits state agencies and local governments from paying or otherwise complying with a ransomware demand.

The bill defines the severity level of a cybersecurity incident in accordance with the National Cyber Incident Response Plan.

State agencies and local governments will be required to report ransomware incidents and high severity level cybersecurity incidents to the Cybersecurity Operations Center and the Cybercrime Office within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement as soon as possible but no later than times specified in the bill. Local governments must also report to the local sheriff.

The bill also requires state agencies to report low level cybersecurity incidents and provides that local governments may report such incidents. State agencies and local governments must also submit after-action reports to FLDS following a cybersecurity or ransomware incident.

CS/HB 7055 requires the Cybersecurity Operations Center to notify the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives of high severity level cybersecurity incidents. The notice must contain a high-level overview of the incident and its likely effects. In addition, the Center must provide the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Cybersecurity Advisory Council with a consolidated incident report on a quarterly basis.

The bill requires state agency and local government employees to undergo certain cybersecurity training within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter.

The bill requires local governments to adopt cybersecurity standards that safeguard the local government's data, information technology, and information technology resources.

The bill expands the purpose of the Cybersecurity Advisory Council to include advising local governments on cybersecurity and requires the Council to examine reported cybersecurity and ransomware incidents to develop best practice recommendations. The Council must submit an annual comprehensive report regarding ransomware to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The bill creates new criminal penalties and fines for certain ransomware offenses against a government entity.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 110-0

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

CS/HB 7057 — Public Meetings/Cybersecurity

by State Affairs Committee; State Administration and Technology Appropriations Subcommittee; Reps. Giallombardo, Fischer, and others (CS/CS/SB 1694 by Appropriations Committee; Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; and Senator Hutson)

The bill provides a general public record exemption for the following information held by an agency before, on, or after July 1, 2022:

- Coverage limits and deductible or self-insurance amounts of insurance or other risk mitigation coverages acquired for the protection of IT systems, operational technology systems, or data of an agency.
- Information relating to critical infrastructure.
- Network schematics, hardware and software configurations, or encryption information or information that identifies detection, investigation, or response practices for suspected or confirmed cybersecurity incidents.

CS/HB 7057 also creates a public meeting exemption for any portion of a meeting that would reveal the confidential and exempt information; however, any portion of an exempt meeting must be recorded and transcribed. The recording and transcript are confidential and exempt from public record requirements.

The bill provides for release of the confidential and exempt information in certain instances and authorizes agencies to report information about cybersecurity incidents in an aggregate format.

The bill repeals duplicative public record exemptions for state agencies and supervisors of elections.

The bill provides for repeal of the exemptions on October 2, 2027, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect on the same date that HB 7055 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in this legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 111-0