

Tab 1	SB 1262 by Collins; (Compare to CS/H 01567) Qualifications of the Director of the Division of Emergency Management						
147140	D	S	RCS	MS, Collins	Delete everything after	01/29 04:58 PM	
Tab 2	SB 1452 by Torres; (Similar to H 01351) Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits						
863742	A	S	RCS	MS, Torres	Delete L.38 - 40:	01/29 04:58 PM	
Tab 3	SB 1666 by Collins; (Identical to H 01329) Veterans						
371270	A	S	RCS	MS, Collins	Delete L.130 - 448:	01/29 04:58 PM	
Tab 4	SB 1720 by Rodriguez; (Identical to H 01407) Marine Encroachment on Military Operations						
Tab 5	SB 1732 by Wright; (Similar to H 00507) Veterans' Assistance						

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

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

Senator Wright, Chair
Senator Torres, Vice Chair

MEETING DATE: Monday, January 29, 2024
TIME: 4:00—6:00 p.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	SB 1262 Collins (Compare CS/H 1567)	Qualifications of the Director of the Division of Emergency Management; Requiring the director of the Division of Emergency Management to meet specified qualifications, etc. MS 01/29/2024 Fav/CS GO RC	Fav/CS Yeas 5 Nays 0
2	SB 1452 Torres (Similar H 1351)	Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits; Citing this act as the "Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act"; prohibiting a person from receiving compensation for advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter except as authorized by law; providing requirements for advertising services related thereto; requiring a person who provides such services to an individual in return for compensation to enter into a written agreement with and provide a certain disclosure to such individual; providing disclosure requirements, etc. MS 01/29/2024 Fav/CS JU RC	Fav/CS Yeas 4 Nays 0
3	SB 1666 Collins (Identical H 1329)	Veterans; Revising the purpose of Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.; revising the duties of the corporation to require that it conduct specified activities directed toward its target market; revising the purpose of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program; authorizing the use of grant funds to provide for a specified educational stipend; prohibiting the Department of State from charging veterans who reside in this state fees for the filing of specified documents, etc. MS 01/29/2024 Fav/CS AHS FP	Fav/CS Yeas 5 Nays 0

COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA

Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security
Monday, January 29, 2024, 4:00—6:00 p.m.

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
4	SB 1720 Rodriguez (Identical H 1407)	Marine Encroachment on Military Operations; Requiring local governments to cooperate with certain major military installations and ranges to encourage compatible land use in associated areas, etc. CA 01/22/2024 Favorable MS 01/29/2024 Favorable RC	Favorable Yeas 4 Nays 0
5	SB 1732 Wright (Similar H 507)	Veterans' Assistance; Requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs, subject to appropriation, to expand outreach programs connecting veterans, families, and their survivors to certain services, benefits, and support; requiring the department to host public events for such purpose; requiring the department to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature which contains specified information, etc. MS 01/29/2024 Favorable AHS FP	Favorable Yeas 4 Nays 0
Other Related Meeting Documents			

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: CS/SB 1262

INTRODUCER: Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Collins

SUBJECT: Qualifications for County Emergency Management Directors

DATE: January 30, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ingram	Proctor	MS	Fav/CS
2.			GO	
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1262 creates minimum education, experience, and training standards for all county emergency management directors (directors).

The bill requires directors to have at least a bachelor's degree and 6 years of verifiable experience in emergency services, emergency management, emergency planning, law enforcement, or firefighting services. At least 3 of those years must be supervisory experience in emergency management, response, or operations for a county, a municipality, the state, or the Federal Government. A master's degree in certain fields may be substituted for 2 years of the required experience but not for the required supervisory experience.

The bill also requires that the directors complete specific National Incident Management System (NIMS) courses, or equivalent courses established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Alternatively, accreditation as a Certified Master Exercise Practitioner, a Certified Emergency Manager, or a Florida Professional Emergency Manager may be a substitute for the course requirements. A director must also have a valid driver license, and if the license is not a Florida driver license, he or she must obtain a Florida driver license within 30 days after being appointed. Current directors will have until June 30, 2026, to meet the new criteria.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

State Emergency Management Act

Florida is vulnerable to a wide variety of emergencies, including natural, technological, and manufactured disasters threatening the health and safety of people, damaging and destroying property, disrupting services, and impeding economic growth and development.¹ To reduce these vulnerabilities, promote emergency² preparedness, response, mitigation, recovery, and coordinate all emergency management functions of the state with the political subdivisions of the state, other states, and the Federal Government,³ the Legislature adopted the State Emergency Management Act (Act).⁴

Under the Act, emergency management⁵ responsibilities include:

- Reducing vulnerability of people and communities of this state to damage, injury, and loss of life and property resulting from natural, technological, or manmade emergencies⁶ or hostile military or paramilitary action.
- Preparing for prompt and efficient response and recovery to protect lives and property affected by emergencies.
- Responding to emergencies using all systems, plans, and resources necessary to preserve adequately the health, safety, and welfare of persons or property affected by the emergency.
- Recovery from emergencies by providing for the rapid and orderly start of restoration and rehabilitation of persons and property affected by emergencies.
- Providing of emergency management system embodying all aspects of preemergency preparedness and postemergency response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Assisting with the anticipation, recognition, appraisal, prevention, and mitigation of emergencies which may be caused or aggravated by inadequate planning for, and regulation of, public and private facilities and land use.⁷

Florida Division of Emergency Management

Overview

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) is created within the Executive Office of the Governor in accordance with s. 14.2016, F.S.,⁸ to implement the purposes of the Act. The FDEM is the state's liaison with federal agencies and other public and private agencies, and it

¹ Section 252.311(1), F.S.

² Section 252.34(4), F.S., defines emergency as any occurrence, or threat thereof, whether natural, technological, or manmade, in war or in peace, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the population or substantial damage to or loss of property.

³ Sections 252.311 and 252.32, F.S.

⁴ Sections 252.31-252.60, F.S. *See* s. 252.31, F.S.

⁵ Section 252.34(5), F.S., defines emergency management as preparation for, the mitigation of, the response to, and the recovery from emergencies and disasters.

⁶ Section 252.34(7), F.S., defines manmade emergency as an emergency caused by an action against persons or society, including, but not limited to, enemy attack, sabotage, terrorism, civil unrest, or other action impairing the orderly administration of government.

⁷ Section 252.34(5)(a)-(f), F.S.

⁸ Ch. 2011-142, s. 7, Laws of Fla.

administers programs to assist communities impacted by an emergency.⁹ With a mission to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate with community stakeholders, the FDEM plans for and responds to both natural and manmade disasters,¹⁰ including, but not limited to, floods, hurricanes, and incidents involving hazardous materials or nuclear power.¹¹ The duties of the FDEM include preparing and updating the state comprehensive emergency management plan (CEMP);¹² adopting standards and requirements for county emergency plans;¹³ assisting political subdivisions with preparing and maintaining their emergency management plans;¹⁴ and reviewing the political subdivision plans, ensuring consistency with the CEMP and the adopted standards and requirements.¹⁵ Additional duties include, coordinating federal, state, and local emergency management actions in advance of an actual emergency to ensure availability of adequately trained and equipped personnel before, during, and after an emergency or disaster.¹⁶

The FDEM also conducts extensive exercises to test state and county emergency capabilities and provides emergency operations training for state and local governmental entities.¹⁷ Additionally, after a disaster, the FDEM advises the Governor on whether to declare an emergency and seek federal relief funds.¹⁸ The State Emergency Operations Center, maintained by the FDEM in Tallahassee, serves as the communications and command center for reporting emergencies and coordinating the state response activities. The State Warning Point, a state emergency communications center operated by the FDEM and staffed around the clock, maintains statewide communications with county emergency officials.¹⁹

FDEM Core Programs²⁰

- Preparedness Bureau administers a statewide emergency management all-hazards preparedness program to ensure the State Emergency Response Team²¹ is prepared.
 - Facilitates prompt and efficient response and recovery.
 - Protects lives and property impacted by disasters.
 - Coordinates training courses for counties and first responders.

⁹ Section 14.2016(1), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 252.34(2), F.S., defines disaster as any natural, technological, or civil emergency that causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to result in a declaration of a state of emergency by a county, the Governor, or the President of the United States. The statute further delineates disasters by the severity of resulting damage as catastrophic, major, or minor.

¹¹ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, About the Division, *available at* <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/about-the-division/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

¹² See section 252.35(2)(a), F.S. The state comprehensive emergency plan must be integrated into and coordinate with federal emergency management plans and programs.

¹³ Section 252.35(2)(b), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 252.35(2)(c), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 252.35(2)(d), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 252.35(2)(l), F.S.

¹⁷ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, *supra* note 11.

¹⁸ Pinellas Park Fire Department, Florida Division of Emergency Management, *available at* <https://www.pinellas-park.com/236/Florida-Division-of-Emergency-Management> (last visited Jan. 24, 2024).

¹⁹ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, *supra* note 11.

²⁰ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, Presentation, *Overview of FDEM*, p. 2 (Nov. 14, 2023) (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

²¹ The FDEM website provides that the State Emergency Response Team is an inter-agency organization authorized by law for the purpose of responding to, recovering from, mitigating against, and preparing for disasters, *available at*, <https://www.floridadisaster.org/ser/> (last visited on Jan. 19, 2024).

- Response Bureau coordinates state operational response activities among partner organizations that are active during emergencies and disasters affecting the state.
 - Monitors incidents that may require state response.
 - Manages 24/7 State Watch Office.²²
 - Oversees logistics vendor management and resource deployment.
 - Supports the State Emergency Response Commission through the Technological Hazards Unit.²³
- Recovery Bureau works to maximize and accelerate federal disaster assistance to eligible public-sector partners and residents through various state and federal disaster assistance programs and administers recovery funding, such as public assistance.
- Mitigation Bureau assists communities in reducing the impacts of certain disasters and provides technical assistance to counties developing and implementing local mitigation strategies.
 - Administers federal mitigation grant programs, including the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, and Flood Mitigation Assistance Program and the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program.
 - Administers the Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program, a state-funded mitigation program. Routinely updates the State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan.²⁴

Division Director

The FDEM director's office provides management and oversight to the FDEM's overall functions.²⁵ In accordance with section 14.2016(1), F.S., the FDEM director is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor and is the head of the FDEM for all purposes.²⁶

Background or credential requirements of the FDEM director are not prescribed in the statute nor under the Act. The current FDEM Executive Director has a master's degree and is accredited as a certified Master Exercise Practitioner²⁷ by the FEMA. He also has over 30 years of experience in Public Safety and Emergency Management within the state, including supervisory experience in the same field.²⁸

²² Section 14.2016(2), F.S., provides that the State Watch Office is established within the FDEM and is a clearinghouse of information with a primary purpose to record, analyze, and share information with federal, state, and county entities for appropriate response to emergencies.

²³ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, About the Division, Response, *Technological Hazards*, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/response/technological-hazards/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

²⁴ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, About the Division, Mitigation, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/mitigation/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

²⁵ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, Office of the Director, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/directors-office/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

²⁶ Section 14.2016(1), F.S.

²⁷ The Master Exercise Practitioner Program is a professional level program designed for advanced exercise practitioners in emergency management exercise design, conduct, and evaluation and is the most advanced program offered through the FEMA Emergency Management Institute. See U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, FEMA-EMI, *Master Exercise Practitioner Program*, available at <https://training.fema.gov/programs/nsec/mepp/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

²⁸ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, Director's Office-Meet the Director, *Kevin Guthrie*, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/directors-office/FDEMdirector/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

Within the office of the director, the media office handles internal and external affairs; the Florida National Guard Liaison²⁹ is the primary point of contact for inquiries and coordination between the military and the FDEM; and regional coordinators³⁰ live and work across the state and are first in line to support to their respective area regions on all emergency management matters including local plan development, preparedness, training and exercise, recovery, and mitigation information.³¹

Emergency Management-Counties and Municipalities

State policy for responding to disasters is to support local emergency response efforts while also recognizing the need for state assistance when the scope of a disaster is greater than can be met by local resources.³² The Act provides specific authorization and emergency powers to counties, requiring each county to establish and maintain an emergency management agency and develop a county emergency management plan and program consistent with the CEMP and program.³³ Municipalities are encouraged to create their own emergency management plans but must coordinate with the county emergency management agency.³⁴

County emergency management agencies must each have a director appointed by either their respective board of county commissioners or county chief administrative officer and serving at the pleasure of the appointing authority. The county emergency management director may be a county constitutional officer³⁵ or an employee of such an officer. Responsible for the organization, administration, and operation of the county emergency management agency, the director must coordinate the emergency activities, services, and programs of the agency throughout the county and serve as the county liaison to FDEM and other local emergency management entities.³⁶

In accordance with s. 252.38(1), F.S., the only qualifications a county director must meet are the minimum training and education standards in the job description approved by the county. Since there are no uniform minimum requirements for county directors, counties vary in the qualifications required for the position as shown by the following table:

²⁹ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, Director's Office, *Military Liaison*, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/directors-office/military-liaison/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

³⁰ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, Director's Office, *Regional Preparedness and Response Coordinators-Regional Emergency Management Coordination Team*, available at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/directors-office/regions/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

³¹ Fla. Division of Emergency Management, *supra* note 25.

³² Section 252.311(3), F.S.

³³ Section 252.38(1)(a), F.S.

³⁴ Section 252.38(2), F.S.

³⁵ FLA. CONST. art. VIII, s. 1(d) requires the election of the following county officers: sheriff, tax collector, property appraiser, supervisor of elections, and clerk of the circuit courts.

³⁶ Section 252.38(1)(b), F.S.

County	Minimum Required Education	Required Experience	Required Licenses/ Certifications
Broward ³⁷	Bachelor's degree in required subject ³⁸	6 years in emergency planning and management, including 4 years of high level supervisory and administrative experience or closely related experience	Valid Florida Class E Driver License; Florida Professional Manager (FPFM) or Certified Emergency Manager (CEM)
Escambia ³⁹	Graduation from 2-year college or university Bachelor's degree may be substituted for 2 years of professional experience	5 years professional experience in emergency management, emergency incident command & control, and familiarity with disaster relief	Valid driver license from state of residence; NIMS certifications IS700, IS800, IS100, IS200, ICS300, and ICS400
Leon County ⁴⁰	Bachelor's degree in required subject ⁴¹	5 years related work experience; 2 years of which must have been in a supervisory capacity; or equivalent combination of training and experience	Valid Florida Driver license.
Sarasota ⁴²	Bachelor's degree in required subject ⁴³ Master's degree ⁴⁴ may be substituted for 2 years of required experience	6 years related experience At least 4 years supervisory experience in emergency management or operations of a city or county *progressively responsible professional experience may be substituted on a year for year basis for the college degree	Valid Florida driver license Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) or Florida Professional Emergency Manager (FPFM) or ability to obtain within one-year
Volusia ⁴⁵	Bachelor's degree in required subject ⁴⁶	5 years progressively responsible work in emergency management	Valid driver license; must obtain a valid Florida driver license within 30 days of appointment and maintain thereafter

³⁷ Broward County, Human Resources Division, Classification Pay Grades, EA044 Director of Emergency Management, available at <https://www.broward.org/HumanResources/Pages/CombinedPayPlan.aspx> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

³⁸ Public safety, emergency management, public or business administration or closely related field. *Id.*

³⁹ Escambia County, BCC Job Descriptions, *Emergency Management Division Director*, available at <https://myescambia.com/our-services/human-resources/employment/job-descriptions> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

⁴⁰ Leon County, Class Specifications, *Director-Emergency Management*, available at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/leoncountyfl/classspecs?keywords=Emergency%20management> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁴¹ Emergency Management, Business or Public Administration, or a related field. *Id.*

⁴² Sarasota County Gov't, Job Posting August 10, 2023, *Emergency Management Chief (Manager III) – R16608*, available at <https://sgrjobs.com/SGR/position.php?JobID=453641> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

⁴³ Public administration, management, business science, or technical field. *Id.*

⁴⁴ Sarasota County Gov't, *supra* note 39. See also, Sarasota County Gov't Classification provides that a master's degree may be substituted for 1 year of required experience for an Emergency Management Chief - Manager IV Classification. (Dec. 4, 2023) available at <https://www.scgov.net/home/showpublisheddocument/62861/638374535070700000> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

⁴⁵ Volusia County, Current Job Openings, Class Specifications, *Emergency Management Director-3166*, available at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/volusiaco/classspecs?page=13> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁴⁶ Business, public administration, emergency management, homeland security, or related field. *Id.*

Emergency Manager Qualifications

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) run by the FEMA is the primary center for the development and delivery of emergency management training nationally, emphasizing programs such as the NIMS.⁴⁷ A comprehensive approach to managing emergency and disaster incidents, NIMS is intended to apply across all jurisdictional levels and functional disciplines for the management of all potential incidents, hazards, and impacts regardless of size, location, or complexity.⁴⁸ The National Qualification System (NQS) within NIMS establishes guidance and tools to assist participants in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel.⁴⁹ The pinnacle program offered by the FEMA's EMI is the Master Exercise Practitioner Program.⁵⁰ In addition to the NIMS program, national certification is available through the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). IAEM has two levels of individual certification, the Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) and the Associate Emergency Manager (AEM).⁵¹

NIMS maintains a core training curriculum including the following courses, all of which are available online as interactive web-based instruction:⁵²

- IS-100.C: Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100. The course introduces the Incident Command System (ICS); provides the foundation for higher level ICS training; describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the ICS; and explains the relationship between ICS and NIMS. Course objectives include all of the following:
 - Explaining the principles and basic structure of the ICS.
 - Describing the NIMS management characteristics that are the foundation of the ICS.
 - Describing the ICS functional areas and the roles of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.
 - Describing the General Staff roles within ICS.
 - Identifying how NIMS management characteristics apply to ICS for a variety of roles and discipline areas.
- IS-200.C: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents/Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200. The course reviews the ICS, provides the context for ICS within initial response, supports higher level ICS training, and provides training on, and resources for, personnel who are likely to assume a supervisory position within ICS. Course objectives include all of the following:

⁴⁷ Nat'l Association of Counties, *Managing Disasters at the County Level, A National Survey* (March 2019) p. 4, available at https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Emergency%20Management%20in%20County%20Government_03.25.19.pdf (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁴⁸ *Id.* See also, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, FEMA, National Incident Management System, available at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁴⁹ U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, FEMA, *National Incident Management System Guideline for the National Qualification System* (Nov. 2017), p. 1, available at https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-05/fema_nims_nqs_guideline_0.pdf (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁵⁰ U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, *supra* note 27.

⁵¹ International Association of Emergency Managers, Certification Intro, available at <https://www.iaem.org/certification/intro> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁵² U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, FEMA-Emergency Management Institute, ICS and NIMS Courses, available at <https://training.fema.gov/nims/> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

- Describing how the NIMS Management Characteristics relate to Incident Command and Unified Command.
- Describing the delegation of authority process, implementing authorities, management by objectives, and preparedness plans and objectives.
- Identifying ICS organizational components, the Command Staff, the General Staff, and ICS tools.
- Describing different types of briefings and meetings.
- Explaining flexibility within the standard ICS organizational structure.
- Explaining the transfer of command briefings and procedures.
- Using ICS to manage an incident or event.
- IS-700.B: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System, IS-700. The course provides an overview of the concepts, principles and components which make the NIMS the comprehensive approach guiding the whole community - all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector - to work together seamlessly to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents. Course objectives include all of the following:
 - Describing and identifying the key concepts, principles, scope, and applicability underlying NIMS.
 - Describing activities and methods for managing resources.
 - Describing the NIMS Management Characteristics.
 - Identifying and describe ICS organizational structures.
 - Explaining Emergency Operations Center (EOC) functions, common models for staff organization, and activation levels.
 - Explaining the interconnectivity within the NIMS Management and Coordination structures: ICS, EOC, Joint Information System, and Multiagency Coordination Groups.
 - Identifying and describing the characteristics of communications and information systems, effective communication, incident information, and communication standards and formats.
- IS-703.B: National Incident Management System Resource Management, IS-703. The course introduces federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency managers, first responders, and incident commanders from all emergency management disciplines to NIMS Resource Management, including private industry and volunteer agency personnel responsible for coordination activities during a disaster. Course objectives include all of the following:
 - Defining the four resource management tasks in preparation for incident response.
 - Identify the six primary tasks of resource management during an incident.
 - Describing the use of mutual aid in incidents.
- IS-800.D: National Response Framework, An Introduction, IS-800. The course provides guidance for the whole community, focusing particularly on those who are involved in delivering and applying the response core capabilities. Course objectives include all of the following:
 - Describing the purpose, scope, organization, and underlying doctrine of the National Response Framework.
 - Describing the roles and responsibilities of response partners.
 - Describing core capabilities for response and actions required to deliver those capabilities.
 - Describing coordinating structures and operational planning used to support emergency response.

- Describing how the stabilization of the seven Community Lifelines reduces threats to public health and safety, or economic security.

The Florida Emergency Preparedness Association (FEPA) is a private non-profit corporation providing an educational network for emergency managers at all levels of government as well as the private sector.⁵³ FEPA certifies as Florida Professional Emergency Managers those experienced emergency managers who have advanced and diverse “knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform effectively” in a comprehensive emergency management program.⁵⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1262 amends s. 252.38, F.S., creating the following minimum qualifications for all county emergency management directors:

- A bachelor’s degree.
- Six years of verifiable experience in emergency services, emergency management, emergency planning, law enforcement, or firefighting services. Three years of which, must be supervisory experience in emergency management, response, or operations for a county, a municipality, the state, or the Federal Government.
- A master’s degree in one or more of the following fields may be substituted for 2 years of the required experience but not for the required supervisory experience: emergency preparedness or management, business or public administration, communications, finance, homeland security, public health, criminal justice, meteorology, or environmental science.
- Valid accreditation as a Certified Master Exercise Practitioner by the FEMA; Certified Emergency Manager; or Florida Professional Emergency Manager or completion of all of the following NIMS courses, or their equivalent courses established by the FEMA:
 - ICS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System.
 - ICS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents.
 - IS-700.b: National Incident Management System, An Introduction.
 - IS-703.b: NIMS Resource Management.
 - IS-800.d: National Response Framework, An Introduction.
- A valid driver license. If the license is not Florida driver license, the director must obtain a Florida driver license within 30 days after being appointed.

In an undesignated section of Florida law, the bill also authorizes a director who does not meet the newly established training or certification criteria on July 1, 2024, to have until June 30, 2026, to satisfy those requirements.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

⁵³ Florida Emergency Preparedness Association, About FEPA, available at <https://www.fepa.org/about-us> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

⁵⁴ Florida Emergency Preparedness Association, FEPA Certification Program, available at <https://www.fepa.org/certification> (last visited Jan. 29, 2024).

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

Not applicable. The bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditures of funds; reduce the counties' or municipalities' ability to raise revenues; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill may have an indeterminate negative economic impact on private individuals seeking appointment as county emergency management directors by requiring at least a bachelor's degree and completion of specific courses pertaining to the NIMS offered by the EMI.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 252.38 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 29, 2024:

The committee substitute:

- Establishes minimum education, experience, and training standards for county emergency management directors and requires the directors to have a valid Florida driver license within 30 days after being appointed.
- Removes the requirement of the FDEM director to meet minimum training and education qualifications established by FDEM rule.

B. Amendments:

None.



147140

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
01/29/2024	.	
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The Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security (Collins) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete everything after the enacting clause
and insert:

Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section
252.38, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

252.38 Emergency management powers of political
subdivisions.—Safeguarding the life and property of its citizens
is an innate responsibility of the governing body of each
political subdivision of the state.



147140

(1) COUNTIES.—

(b)1. Each county emergency management agency created and established pursuant to ss. 252.31-252.90 shall have a director. The director must meet the following minimum training and education qualifications:

a. A bachelor's degree.

b. Six years of verifiable experience in emergency services, emergency management, emergency planning, law enforcement, or firefighting services, of which at least 3 years must be supervisory experience in emergency management, response, or operations for a county, a municipality, the state, or the Federal Government.

c. A master's degree in emergency preparedness or management, business or public administration, communications, finance, homeland security, public health, criminal justice, meteorology, or environmental science may be substituted for 2 years of experience of those required in sub-subparagraph b. but not for the required years of supervisory experience.

d. Completion of the following National Incident Management System courses, or equivalent courses established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency through the Emergency Management Institute:

(I) ICS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System;

(II) ICS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents;

(III) IS-700.b: National Incident Management System, An Introduction;

(IV) IS-703.b: NIMS Resource Management; and

(V) IS-800.d: National Response Framework, An Introduction.



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A valid accreditation as a Certified Master Exercise Practitioner by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Certified Emergency Manager, or Florida Professional Emergency Manager will satisfy the requirements of this sub-subparagraph.

e. A valid driver license. If the license is not a Florida driver license, the director must obtain a Florida driver license within 30 days after being appointed as director.

~~2. established in a job description approved by the county.~~
The director shall be appointed by the board of county commissioners or the chief administrative officer of the county, as described in chapter 125 or the county charter, if applicable, to serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority, in conformance with applicable resolutions, ordinances, and laws.

3. A county constitutional officer, or an employee of a county constitutional officer, may be appointed as director following prior notification to the division.

4. Each board of county commissioners shall promptly inform the division of the appointment of the director and other personnel.

5. Each director has direct responsibility for the organization, administration, and operation of the county emergency management agency. The director shall coordinate emergency management activities, services, and programs within the county and shall serve as liaison to the division and other local emergency management agencies and organizations.

Section 2. A county emergency management director who does not satisfy the training or certification requirements of



147140

section 1 of this act as of July 1, 2024, shall have until June 30, 2026, to complete such requirements.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.

===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete everything before the enacting clause
and insert:

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to qualifications for county emergency
management directors; amending s. 252.38, F.S.;
requiring county emergency management directors to
meet specified qualifications; requiring such
directors to meet such qualifications by a specified
date; providing an effective date.

By Senator Collins

14-01383-24

20241262__

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to qualifications of the director of the Division of Emergency Management; amending s. 14.2016, F.S.; requiring the director of the Division of Emergency Management to meet specified qualifications; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (1) of section 14.2016, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

14.2016 Division of Emergency Management.—

(1) The Division of Emergency Management is established within the Executive Office of the Governor. The division shall be a separate budget entity, as provided in the General Appropriations Act and shall prepare and submit a budget request in accordance with chapter 216. The division shall be responsible for all professional, technical, and administrative support functions necessary to carry out its responsibilities under part I of chapter 252. The director of the division shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall be the head of the division for all purposes. The director must meet the minimum training and education qualifications established by division rule. The division shall administer programs to rapidly apply all available aid to communities stricken by an emergency as defined in s. 252.34 and, for this purpose, shall provide liaison with federal agencies and other public and private agencies.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.



The Florida Senate

Committee Agenda Request

To: Senator Tom Wright, Chair
Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Subject: Committee Agenda Request

Date: January 10, 2024

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill # 1262**, relating to Qualifications of the Director of the Division of Emergency Management, be placed on the:

- ☐ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☒ next committee agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Collins", is written over a horizontal line.

Senator Jay Collins
Florida Senate, District 14



Florida Division of Emergency Management

Overview of FDEM Ongoing Hurricane Response & Recovery

November 14, 2023



Overview of FDEM Core Programs

Preparedness

- Administer Florida's All-Hazards planning programs to ensure the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) is prepared.
- Facilitate prompt and efficient response and recovery.
- Protect lives and property impacted by disasters.
- Coordinate training courses for counties and first responders.

Response

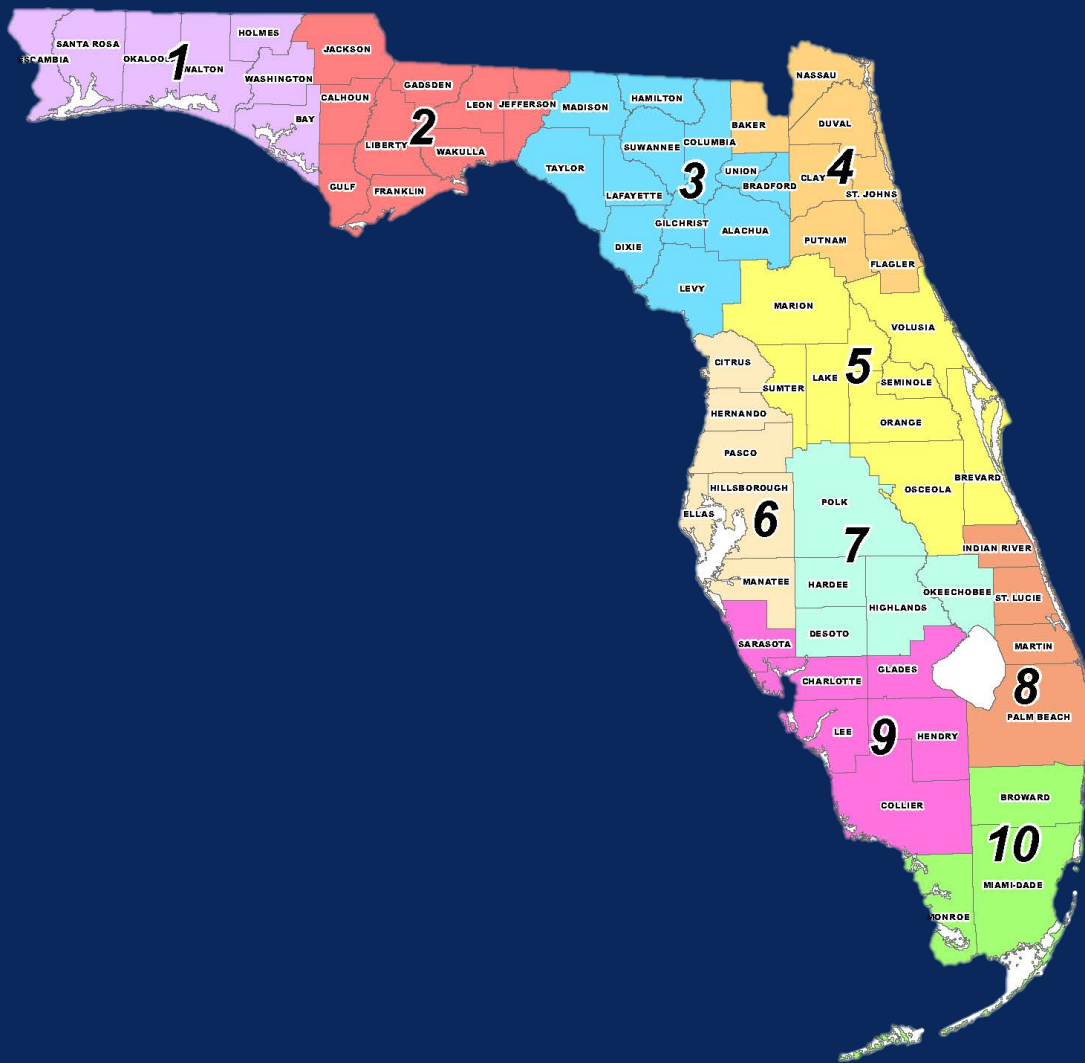
- Monitor incidents that may require State response.
- Manage 24/7 State Watch Office.
- Oversee logistics vendor management and resource deployment.
- Support State Emergency Response Commission through Tech Hazards Unit– *Nuclear Power Plants*.

Recovery

- Work to maximize and accelerate federal disaster assistance to eligible public-sector partners and residents.
- Administer recovery funding such as Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and American Recovery Plan Act.
- Paid out over \$8.3 billion in recovery funding to local governments in four years.

Mitigation

- State Coordinating Agency of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Administer FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
- Administer FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program.
- Provide technical assistance to counties developing and implementing local mitigation strategies.



FDEM Operational Regions





State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)

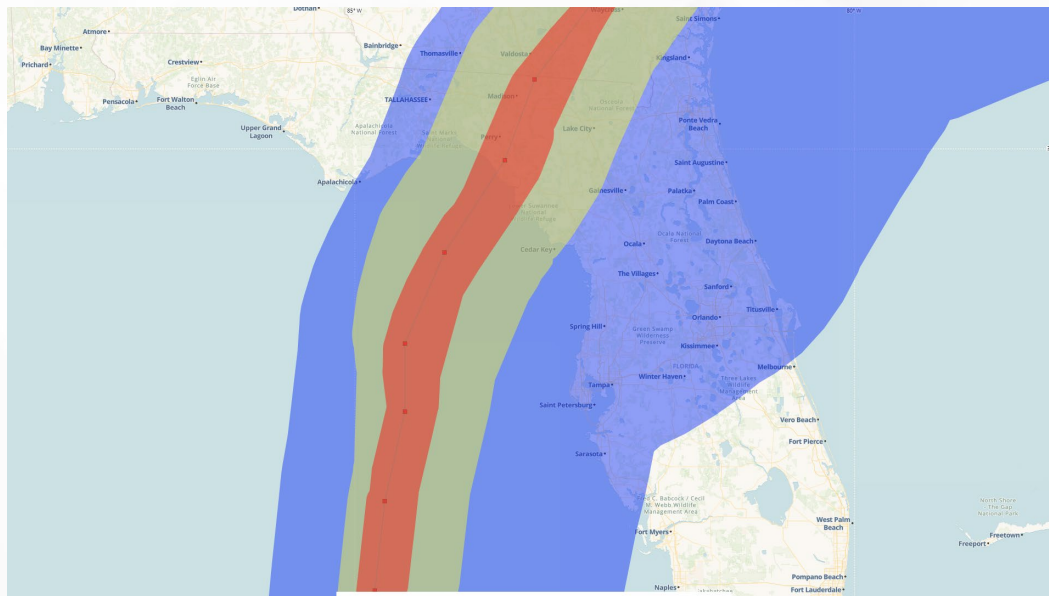
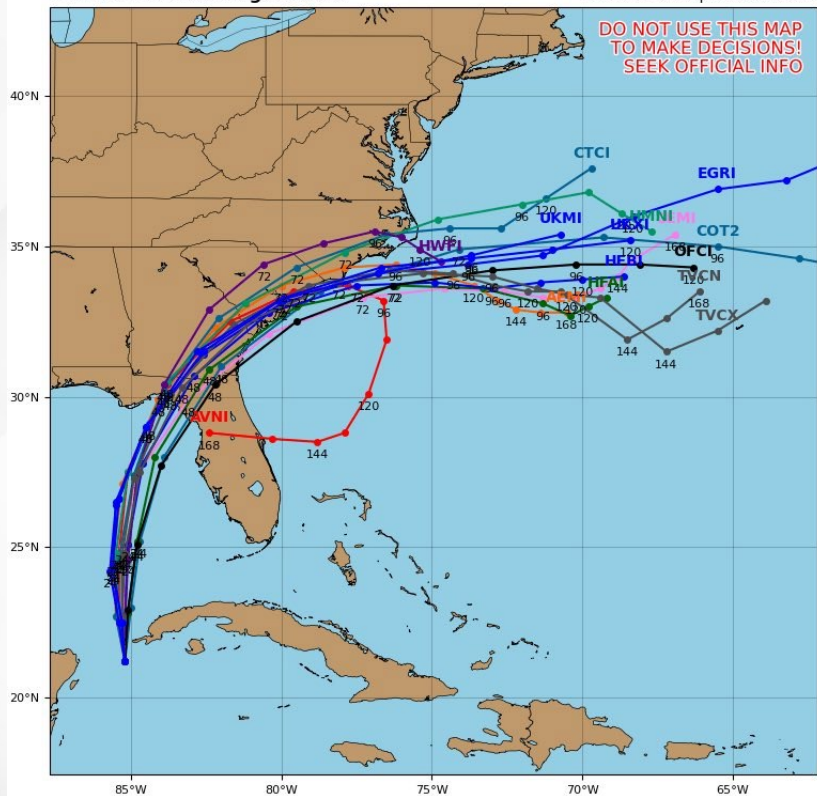


Hurricane Idalia Path

Tropical Storm IDALIA Model Track Guidance

Initialized at 18z Aug 28 2023

Levi Cowan - tropicaltidbits.com

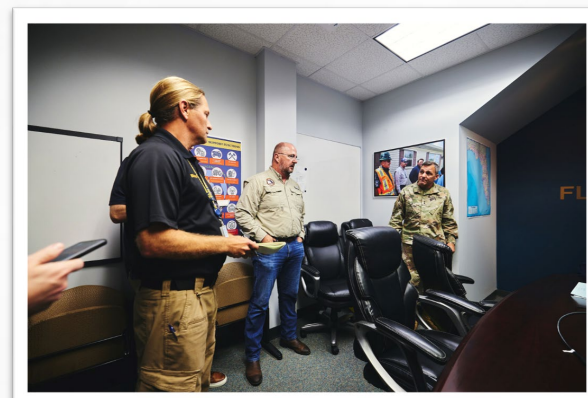




Hurricane Idalia – August 30, 2023

Immediate: RESPONSE

- **Logistics** – FDEM mobilized requested resources to support residents and first responders in the path of the storm, including meals ready to eat, bottled water, tarps, and generators.
- **Infrastructure** – 90% of utility accounts impacted by the storm were restored within three days of landfall.
- **Human Services** – More than 220,000 meals, over 150,000 water bottles and 3,000 tarps have been distributed at Points of Distribution.
- **Coordinate, Collaborate, Communicate** – Partner agencies & non-profits played integral roles in the Idalia response and ongoing recovery.





Hurricane Idalia – August 30, 2023

Ongoing: RECOVERY

- **Public Assistance** – FDEM prioritized recovery funding and already has **\$273M** obligated.
- **State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program** – Florida's state-led sheltering program is available through FloridaRecovers.org in partnership with the American Red Cross to provide temporary sheltering options — such as travel trailers and hotel rooms — for households whose homes may be uninhabitable.
- **Volunteer Village** – Mayo, Lafayette County. Provides lodging for approximately 100 volunteers who are serving in the surrounding areas.
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program** – The state is currently estimating that it will receive **\$241,007,130** in hazard mitigation funding to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures in communities impacted by Hurricane Idalia.





Hurricane Ian – September 28, 2022

Ongoing: RECOVERY & MITIGATION

- **Unite Florida Recovery Portal** – This program was created in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian to connect survivors to important recovery resources, including housing support:
 - **State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program**
 - **Sheltering in Home for Recovery Continuation**
- **Public Assistance** – FDEM prioritized recovery funding by cutting through red tape and achieving federal obligation of **\$1 billion** in funds during the first 256 days post-landfall of Hurricane Ian - 344 days faster than any other hurricane on record.
- **Current Numbers:** Obligated **\$1.8B**
In Development **\$2.48B**, including \$88M for FDEM
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program** – The state is currently estimated to receive **\$1,165,933,863** in Hazard mitigation funding to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures in communities impacted by Hurricane Ian.





Hurricane Nicole – November 10, 2022

Ongoing: RECOVERY & MITIGATION

- **Public Assistance –**
 - Obligated: **\$27,456,639**
 - In Development: **\$180,610,628**
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program –**
 - The state is currently estimated to receive **\$47,589,863** in hazard mitigation funding to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures in communities impacted by Hurricane Nicole.



Thank You



For Additional Questions:

Amelia Johnson

Phone: 850-800-7669

Email: Amelia.Johnson@em.myflorida.com

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: CS/SB 1452

INTRODUCER: Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senator Torres

SUBJECT: Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits

DATE: January 29, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>JU</u>	<u> </u>
3.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>RC</u>	<u> </u>

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1452 creates the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act to regulate the practice of providing paid services for advising or assisting an individual as a claimant for veterans' benefits, in addition to limitations set in federal law.

A person who advertises paid services must include in a readily visible location on the print or electronic advertisement a specified disclosure. The bill requires the provider and client to enter a written agreement before assistance is rendered containing a nearly identical disclosure to the advertising disclosure. The written agreement must specify terms of payment, comply with federal law, and be signed by both parties.

The bill prohibits a provider from guaranteeing an outcome, receiving excessive or unreasonable fees, or being compensated for a referral.

If a client files a notice of disagreement on a federal claim decision, the provider may not receive compensation for services provided prior to the date on which the notice is filed.

A violation of this act is a violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act (FDUTPA).

The bill takes effect upon becoming law.

II. Present Situation:

Veterans in Florida

Other than California and Texas, Florida has the third largest population of veterans.¹ More than 1.4 million veterans reside in the state, which is 12 percent of the state's population of adults aged 18 and over.² Additionally, Florida has the second largest population of veterans who are women, at more than 168,000. Veterans who are women is one of the fastest growing among the veterans' population.³

State Benefits for Veterans

In addition to federal benefits, veterans in the state have available a multitude of benefits. The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) educates and assists veterans to help them access services and benefits in housing, health care, disability claims, education, burial benefits, and employment including veterans' preference.⁴

The FDVA also annually produces the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide, to connect veterans and their families with earned federal and state benefits, services, and support. The guide provides a comprehensive listing of services and benefits for veterans in the state.⁵

Veterans Claims Examiners

The FDVA oversees and operates as part of its jurisdiction the Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance. A bureau within the division is the Bureau of Veteran Claim Services.⁶ Through the Bureau, veterans' claims examiners assist veterans in securing earned services, benefits, and support.

The FDVA houses claims examiner offices throughout the state, including at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office in Bay Pine, each VA Medical Center, and many VA Outpatient Clinics.⁷ Claims assistance is provided at no cost and covers all state and federal veterans' programs.⁸

¹ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Our Veterans*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/our-veterans/> (last visited Jan. 19, 2024).

² *Id.*

³ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Women Veterans*, available at <https://floridavets.org/our-veterans/women-veterans/> (last visited Jan. 19, 2024).

⁴ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Benefits & Services*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/benefits-services/> (last visited Jan. 19, 2024).

⁵ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide*, available at <https://floridavets.org/resources/va-benefits-guide/> (last visited Jan. 18, 2024).

⁶ Section 20.37(2), F.S.

⁷ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Benefits & Services, Claims*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/benefits-services/claims/> (last visited Jan. 19, 2024).

⁸ *Id.*

City and County Veteran Service Officers

City and county veteran service officers are hired locally, respectively by their local municipality or the board of county commissioners.⁹ To qualify, an applicant must be a veteran who:

- Served in the active military, naval, or air service; and
- Was discharged or released under honorable conditions or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions.¹⁰

The applicant must additionally have a minimum of a 2-year degree from an accredited institute of higher education or a high school degree or its equivalent and 4 years of administrative experience.¹¹

A surviving spouse may instead be hired if the veteran spouse meets those qualifications.¹²

The FDVA provides required training for county and city veteran service officers to assist veterans,¹³ and every county or city veteran service officer must additionally successfully pass a test administered by the FDVA. In addition, the FDVA establishes periodic training refresher courses, with completion a condition of continuing employment.¹⁴

Federal Law on Paid Services for Benefit Assistance of Veterans

Federal law governs the payment of fees by a veteran to an accredited agent or attorney for representation in securing federal benefits.¹⁵ Pursuant to federal law, an accredited attorney or an agent may receive fees for representation before an agency of original jurisdiction or the Board of Veterans' Appeals, subject to limitation.¹⁶

Fee Agreement

Federal law requires that a fee agreement include:

- The name of the veteran;
- The name of the claimant or appellant if other than the veteran;
- The name of any disinterested third-party payer and their relationship with the veteran, claimant, or appellant;
- The VA file number;
- Specific terms under which the amount to be paid for services is determined; and
- If the VA is to pay the agent or attorney directly out of past due benefits.¹⁷

A fee agreement must also include the following statement, signed by the provider:

⁹ Section 292.11(1), F.S.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Section 291.11(4), F.S.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ 38 CFR s. 14.636

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ 38 CFR s. 14.636(g)

“I certify that no agreement, oral or otherwise, exists under which the claimant or appellant will provide anything of value to the third-party payer in this case in return for payment of my fee or salary, including, but not limited to, reimbursement of any fees paid.”¹⁸

Amount of Fees

A fee charged for services must be reasonable, based on:

- The extent and type of services performed;
- The complexity of the case;
- The level of skill and competence required in giving the services;
- The amount of time spent on the case;
- The results achieved, including the amount of benefits recovered;
- The level of review to which the claim was taken and the representative retained;
- Rates charged by other representatives for similar services;
- Whether, and to what extent, the payment of fees is contingent upon the results achieved; and
- If applicable, why an agent or attorney was discharged or withdrew from representation before the date of the decision awarding benefits.¹⁹

Further, a presumption of reasonableness applies if a fee does not exceed 20 percent of a past-due benefit if the representative provided service through the date of the decision awarding benefits. If a fee exceeds 33 and 1/3 percent of a past-due benefit, it is considered unreasonable. Each presumption is rebuttable upon a showing of clear and convincing evidence.²⁰

Filing of a Notice of Disagreement

A Notice of Disagreement is a filing by a claimant who disagrees with the decision made by the VA on a disability compensation claim.²¹ Although the claim decision by the VA becomes certified after 30 days, it isn’t final until one year after the date of the decision. Therefore, the claimant can file a Notice of Disagreement at any time up to one year from the date of decision.

Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act

History and Purpose

The FDUTPA became law in 1973.²² The FDUTPA is a consumer and business protection measure that prohibits unfair methods of competition, unconscionable acts or practices, and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in trade or commerce.²³ The FDUTPA is based on federal law, and specifically section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.²⁴

¹⁸ 38 CFR s. 14.636(d)(2)(iii)

¹⁹ 38 CFR s. 14.636(e)

²⁰ 38 CFR 14.636(f)

²¹ Veterans Administration, *VA News, How to File a Notice of Disagreement on your VA Compensation Claim*, available at <https://news.va.gov/33909/> (last visited Jan. 22, 2024).

²² Ch. 73-124, Laws of Fla.; codified at part II of ch. 501, F.S.

²³ Sections 501.202 and 501.203(8), F.S. Trade or commerce includes the advertising, soliciting, or providing of a good or service.

²⁴ 15 USC s. 45; s. 501.204(2), F.S.

The State Attorney or the Department of Legal Affairs may bring actions when it is in the public interest on behalf of consumers or governmental entities.²⁵ The Office of the State Attorney may enforce violations of the FDUTPA if the violations take place in its jurisdiction.²⁶ The Department of Legal Affairs has enforcement authority if the violation is multi-jurisdictional, the state attorney defers in writing, or the state attorney fails to act within 90 days after a written complaint is filed.²⁷ Consumers may also file suit through private actions.²⁸

Remedies under the FDUTPA

The Department of Legal Affairs and the State Attorney, as enforcing authorities, have available the following remedies:

- Declaratory judgments.
- Injunctive relief.
- Actual damages on behalf of consumers and businesses.
- Cease and desist orders.
- Civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per willful violation.²⁹

Remedies for private parties are limited to the following:

- A declaratory judgment and an injunction where a person is aggrieved by a FDUTPA violation.
- Actual damages, attorney fees, and court costs, where a person has suffered a loss due to a FDUTPA violation.³⁰

Federal Unfair and Deceptive Trade Practices

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) unfair and deceptive trade practices regulations prohibit unfair³¹ or deceptive³² acts or practices in or affecting commerce.³³ The FTC's regulations include "Truth In Advertising" guidelines, which require advertisements to be truthful, not misleading, and when appropriate, backed by scientific evidence.³⁴ To enforce these regulations, the FTC may take law enforcement action.³⁵

²⁵ Sections 501.203(2), 501.206, and 501.207, F.S.

²⁶ Section 501.203(2), F.S.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Section 501.211, F.S.

²⁹ Sections 501.207(1), 501.208, and 501.2075, F.S. Civil Penalties are deposited into general revenue. Section 501.2075, F.S. Enforcing authorities may also request attorney fees and costs of investigation or litigation. Section 501.2105, F.S.

³⁰ Section 501.211(1) and (2), F.S.

³¹ A practice is "unfair" if it "causes or is likely to cause substantial injury to consumers which is not reasonably avoidable by consumers themselves and not outweighed by countervailing benefits to consumers or to competition." 15 U.S.C. s. 45(n).

³² A practice is "deceptive" if there is a "representation, omission or practice that is likely to mislead the consumer acting reasonably in the circumstances, to the consumer's detriment." Federal Trade Commission, *FTC Policy Statement on Deception* (Oct. 14, 1983), available at

https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/public_statements/410531/831014deceptionstmt.pdf; (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

³³ 15 U.S.C. s. 45(a)(1).

³⁴ Federal Trade Commission, *Truth In Advertising*, available at <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/media-resources/truth-advertising> (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

³⁵ Federal Trade Commission, *Protecting Consumers*, available at <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising/protecting-consumers> (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1452 creates s. 295.225, F.S., to be cited as the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act.

The bill defines as:

- Compensation – payment of money, a thing of value, or financial benefit.
- A person – an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, limited liability company, joint venture, public corporation, or any other legal or for-profit commercial entity.
- A veterans' benefits matter – the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of a claim affecting a person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for a benefit, program, service, commodity, function, or status the entitlement to which is determined under the laws and regulations administered by the FDVA or the VA for veterans and their family members.

The bill prohibits a person from being compensated for advising or assisting an individual with a veterans' benefits matter except pursuant to federal law and according to the limitations of the GUARD VA Benefits Act.

Regarding advertising for paid services to assist veterans with benefits, the provider of services must include a disclosure that reads:

This business is not sponsored by or affiliated with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, or any other federally chartered veterans' service organization. Other organizations, including, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, your county or city veteran service office, and other federally chartered veterans' service organizations, may be able to provide you with these services free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not necessarily endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans' benefits beyond the services that this business offers.

Further, the disclosure, provided in print or electronically, must appear in a readily visible location on the advertisement. If conveyed orally, the spoken disclosure must be clear and intelligible.

In addition to the advertising disclosure, the provider must enter into a written agreement with the claimant which specifies the terms of payment of fees for services provided, complies with federal law in 38 C.F.R. s. 14.636, and is signed by both parties.

The following disclosure is required to be conveyed, both orally and in writing, as contained in the agreement:

This business is not sponsored by or affiliated with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, or any other federally chartered veterans' service organization.

Other organizations, including, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, your county or city veteran service office, and other federally chartered veterans' service organizations, may be able to provide you with this service free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not necessarily endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans' benefits beyond the benefits for which you are receiving services here.

Compliance with the written disclosure requires that the:

- Disclosure appear in at least 12-point font;
- Disclosure be included in a readily noticeable and identifiable part of the agreement;
- Client verbally acknowledge understanding of the oral disclosure; and
- Client sign the document in which the written disclosure is contained.

The bill prohibits a provider from:

- Guaranteeing, directly or by implication, that a client will receive certain benefits or of a specified level, percentage, or amount of veterans' benefits.
- Receiving excessive or unreasonable fees as compensation, as determined in 38 C.F.R. s. 14.636.
- Being compensated for referring a person to another person to advise or assist them on a veterans' benefits matter.

If a person who sought services for compensation files a notice of disagreement pursuant to Title 38 C.F.R., the provider may not receive compensation for services provided prior to the date on which the notice is filed.

A violation of this act is a deceptive and unfair trade practice and a violation of part II, chapter 501, of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act.

The bill takes effect upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill requirement on advertising may result in an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on a private provider of assistance with securing veterans benefits.

C. Government Sector Impact:

To the extent that the bill creates a new violation of the FDUTPA, Offices of the State Attorney and the Department of Legal Affairs may incur enforcement costs, which are indeterminate.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates s. 295.225, Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 29, 2024:

The CS narrows the definition of a “person” to exclude an association or a government, governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality and restricts an included commercial entity to one that is for-profit.

B. Amendments:

None.



863742

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
01/29/2024	.	
	.	
	.	
	.	

The Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security (Torres) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment

Delete lines 38 - 40
and insert:
joint venture, public corporation, or any other legal or for-profit commercial entity.

By Senator Torres

25-01488-24

20241452__

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to compensation for advising or assisting in veterans' benefits; creating s. 295.225, F.S.; providing a short title; providing definitions; prohibiting a person from receiving compensation for advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter except as authorized by law; providing requirements for advertising services related thereto; requiring a person who provides such services to an individual in return for compensation to enter into a written agreement with and provide a certain disclosure to such individual; providing disclosure requirements; requiring the person who provides such services to retain a copy of the disclosure for a certain period; prohibiting a person from guaranteeing an individual's receipt of benefits, receiving excessive or unreasonable compensation, or receiving compensation for referring an individual to another person; prohibiting a person from receiving compensation for services provided before the date on which a notice of disagreement is filed; providing that a violation is a deceptive and unfair trade practice; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 295.225, Florida Statutes, is created to read:
295.225 Advising or assisting in veterans' benefits

Page 1 of 5

CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

25-01488-24

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matters; receipt of compensation.

(1) This act may be cited as the "Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act."

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Compensation" means payment of any money, thing of value, or financial benefit.

(b) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, limited liability company, association, joint venture, public corporation, government, governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, or any other legal or commercial entity.

(c) "Veterans' benefits matter" means the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of any claim affecting any person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function, or status the entitlement to which is determined under the laws and regulations administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs or the United States Department of Veterans Affairs pertaining to veterans, their dependents, their survivors, and any other individual eligible for such benefits.

(3) A person may not receive compensation for advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter except as authorized by federal law and this section.

(4) A person who advertises services in advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter in return for compensation must provide the following disclosure in such advertisement:

"This business is not sponsored by or affiliated with

Page 2 of 5

CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

25-01488-24

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the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, or any other federally chartered veterans' service organization. Other organizations, including, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, your county or city veteran service office, and other federally chartered veterans' service organizations, may be able to provide you with these services free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not necessarily endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans' benefits beyond the services that this business offers."

If such advertisement is written, including in an electronic format, the disclosure must appear in a readily visible location on the advertisement. If such advertisement is oral, the spoken statement of the disclosure must be clear and intelligible.

(5) (a) A person who provides services in advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter in return for compensation must, before providing such services:

1. Enter into a written agreement with such individual which provides the terms of the individual's payment of fees for the services provided, which adheres to all criteria specified in 38 C.F.R. s. 14.636, and which is signed by both parties.

2. Provide the following disclosure to the individual, both orally and in writing:

25-01488-24

20241452

"This business is not sponsored by or affiliated with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, or any other federally chartered veterans' service organization. Other organizations, including, but not limited to, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, your county or city veteran service office, and other federally chartered veterans' service organizations, may be able to provide you with this service free of charge. Products or services offered by this business are not necessarily endorsed by any of these organizations. You may qualify for other veterans' benefits beyond the benefits for which you are receiving services here."

The written disclosure must appear in at least 12-point font and must appear in a readily noticeable and identifiable location in the written agreement required under subparagraph 1. The individual must verbally acknowledge understanding of the oral disclosure and must sign the document in which the written disclosure appears in order to represent understanding of the disclosure. The person providing services must retain a copy of the written disclosure while providing such services to the individual and for at least 1 year after the date on which the service relationship terminates.

(b) A person may not:

1. Guarantee, either directly or by implication, that an individual is certain to receive specific veterans' benefits or that an individual is certain to receive a specific level,

25-01488-24

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percentage, or amount of veterans' benefits.

2. Receive excessive or unreasonable fees as compensation for advising or assisting an individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter. The provisions of 38 C.F.R. s. 14.636 shall govern determinations of whether a fee is excessive or unreasonable.

3. Receive compensation for referring an individual to another person to advise or assist the individual with regard to a veterans' benefits matter.

(6) If an individual to whom a person provides services under this section in return for compensation files a notice of disagreement pursuant to Title 38 C.F.R., the person who provided such services may not receive compensation for any services provided to such individual before the date on which the notice is filed.

(7) A violation of this section is a deceptive and unfair trade practice and constitutes a violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act under part II of chapter 501.

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

1/29/24

Meeting Date

Military + Veterans Affairs

Committee

1452

Bill Number or Topic

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

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Karen Murillo - AARP

Phone 850-567-0414

Address 215 S. Monroe St., Ste. 603
Street

Email Kmurillo@aarp.org

Tallahassee FL
City State

32301
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:

AARP

☐ 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)

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

1452

Bill Number or Topic

1/29/24

Meeting Date

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

Military & Vet

Committee

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name

Lexi Cook - Law Student, Law Clinic

Phone

(850) 644-7472

Address

425 W. Jefferson St.

Email

amcl9d@fsu.edu

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32306

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)

1/29/24

Meeting Date

Military and Veterans Affairs,

Committee

Name **Bill Helmich**

Address **303 Johns Drive**

Street

Tallahassee

City

FL

State

32301

Zip

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

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

SB 1452

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Phone **850-251-3126**

Email **bill@helmichconsulting.com**

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:

VFW / American Legion

☐ 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)

1/29/24

Meeting Date

Military & Vets Affairs

Committee

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

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

1452

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name **Eric King , VFW**

Phone **850.445.1077**

Address **6119 Ox Bottom Manor Dr.**

Email **ericking@comcast.net**

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)



The Florida Senate

Committee Agenda Request

To: Senator Tom Wright, Chair
Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Subject: Committee Agenda Request

Date: January 17, 2024

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #1452**, relating to Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits, be placed on the:

- ☒ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☐ next committee agenda.

Senator Victor M. Torres, Jr.
Florida Senate, District 25

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: CS/SB 1666

INTRODUCER: Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security and Senator Collins

SUBJECT: Veterans

DATE: January 29, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	Proctor	MS	Fav/CS
2.			AHS	
3.			FP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1666 contains multiple provisions on veterans. The bill:

- Expands job outreach, marketing and support services of Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (FIFV);
- Limits the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to only one appointment from the body for which they preside, for the three members they may each appoint to the governing board of directors of FIFV;
- Clarifies that the focus of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is to link veterans and their spouses with businesses in a target or secondary industry business;
- Allows an educational stipend for veterans while training at any location of the University of Florida's (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) within the state;
- Expands the role of FIFV in assisting with industry certification;
- Provides that a participating business in a FIFV grant program may also receive a grant under any state program, and not just the Quick Response Training Program;
- Exempts veterans from certain business filing fees with the Department of State (DOS);
- Creates a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses for honorably discharged veterans with a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or more;
- Revises the structure, appointment of members, and frequency of meetings of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries; and
- Adds to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact. See Section V.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

The purpose of FIFV is to promote the state as veteran-friendly by assisting veterans and their spouses with connections to businesses and employment.¹ Duties of the FIFV are to:

- Contract with a research entity experienced in performing market research on the veteran demographic to identify the target market and their educational and employment needs;
- Advise the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on the target market; a marketing campaign designed to keep the target market in the state; and methods to disseminate information to the target market on interests and needs of veterans and their families;
- Promote and enhance the value of military skill sets to businesses;
- Implement the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program;
- Responsibly and prudently manage all funds received and ensure that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements;
- Administer relevant programs; and
- Serve as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for employers and transitioning servicemembers.²

FIFV is governed by a nine-member board of directors.³ The Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint three members to the board, in consideration of military experience and business expertise. Members of the board of directors serve for staggered terms of 4 years. Board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred while serving.⁴

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The Florida Department of Veteran Affairs (FDVA) established the Veterans Employment and Training Services program to link veterans and their spouses with businesses for employment.⁵ The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans or their spouses.⁶ The program is administered by FIFV, whose duties include:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses who live in the state or are interested in relocating and are seeking employment;
- Offering skills assessments to veterans or their spouses to establish employment goals and apply for and achieve gainful employment;

¹ Section 295.21(1), F.S.

² Section 295.21(3), F.S.

³ Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Section 295.22(2), F.S.

⁶ *Id.*

- Assisting Florida businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and veterans' spouses, including providing information about state and federal benefits of hiring veterans;
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of businesses;
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in this state which connects business leaders in the state with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs;
- Performing its functions as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for qualified businesses in this state and transitioning servicemembers;
- Assisting veterans and their spouses in accessing training, education, and employment in health care professions; and
- Coordinating with the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health (DOH) to assist veterans and their spouses in obtaining licensure.

Department of State and Incorporation

The DOS is responsible for receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required in law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,⁷ articles of incorporation,⁸ and registration of fictitious names.⁹ A person who wants to file incorporation and business filings with the DOS must pay the appropriate fee. Amongst the filings received and maintained by the DOS, and the appropriate filing fee associated with them, are those identified in:

- Chapter 605, Florida revised limited liability company act: limited liability companies file with the DOS a registration with their name, registered agent, and registered office location;¹⁰
- Chapter 607, Florida business corporation act: corporations file their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;¹¹
- Chapter 617, Corporations not for profit: requires not for profit corporations to file with the DOS their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;¹² and
- Chapter 620, Partnership laws: limited partnerships must file a certificate of limited partnership with the DOS containing the name of the limited partnership, the address, and the business address of each general partner¹³ as well as an annual report, among other documents.¹⁴ General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.¹⁵

⁷ See, e.g., ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.

⁸ Section 607.0203, F.S.

⁹ Section 865.09, F.S.

¹⁰ Sections 605.0112(5), 605.113(4), and 605.113(5), F.S. See s. 605.0206, F.S.

¹¹ Sections 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. See 607.0120(9), F.S.

¹² Sections 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

¹³ Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 620.1210, F.S.

¹⁵ Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

Fees vary and a sampling is provided below.

Department of State Filing Fees		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

Hunting and Fishing Licenses

A person who wants to recreationally hunt or fish in Florida must obtain a recreational license, permit, or authorization number and pay the appropriate fee.¹⁶

Section 379.353(2), F.S., exempts specified individuals from having to possess a recreational license while hunting or fishing. A few examples include any person hunting or freshwater fishing on her or his homestead property, or on the homestead property of the person's spouse or minor child; any minor child hunting or freshwater fishing on the homestead property of her or his parent; and any resident who is a member of the United States Armed Forces and not stationed in this state, when home on leave for 30 days or less, upon submission of orders.

In addition, an exemption on a hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license and permit fee is available to a resident who is certified or determined to be:

- Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of workers' compensation under chapter 440 as verified by an order of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the carrier providing workers' compensation benefits, or to be totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board, by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or a branch of the United States Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued by the FDVA, upon proof of the same.¹⁷ A license issued on a no fee basis expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.¹⁸
- Disabled as verified by the United States Social Security Administration. A license issued on a no fee basis expires after 2 years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every 2 years thereafter.¹⁹

¹⁶ Section 379.354, F.S.

¹⁷ Section 379.353(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 379.353(1), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 379.353(1)(b), F.S.

Current fees on these licenses for Florida residents are provided below.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, created within the DOH, is a 16-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council is required to meet twice a year²⁰ and is composed of a minimum of:

- four individuals with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals with brain injuries;
- four individuals with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals with spinal cord injuries; and
- two individuals who represent the special needs of children with brain or spinal cord injuries.²¹

The remaining balance of council members must be physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, and representatives from support groups that have expertise in the rehabilitation of individuals with brain or spinal cord injuries.²²

Council members are appointed by the State Surgeon General. All members serve for a 4-year term and can only serve two terms. The council must meet at least twice annually.²³

The purpose of the council is to provide advice and expertise to the DOH in the preparation, implementation, and periodic review of the brain and spinal cord injury program.²⁴

Members of the advisory council serve unpaid but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses for required attendance at council meetings.²⁵

Special Instruction for Middle and High Grades Public School Students

Instructional staff of public schools are required to provide instruction on:

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including national sovereignty, natural law, self-evident truth, equality of all persons, limited government, popular sovereignty, and inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property, and how they form the philosophical foundation of our government.
- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the U.S. Constitution, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights and how the constitution provides the structure of our government.

²⁰ Section 381.78(1), F.S.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ Sections 381.78(2) and (3), F.S.

²⁴ Section 381.78(4), F.S.

²⁵ Section 381.78(5), F.S.

- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the most important of the Federalist Papers.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government, including the primary functions of and interrelationships between the Federal Government, the state, and its local entities.
- U.S. history, including the period of discovery, early colonies, the War for Independence, the Civil War, the expansion of the United States to its present boundaries, the world wars, and the civil rights movement to the present.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the history and contributions of Americans of the African diaspora to society.
- The history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the history of Japanese internment camps and the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II; the immigration, citizenship, civil rights, identity, and culture of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to American society.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States.
- The study of women's contributions to the United States.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide. Limits instruction to on or before Medal of Honor Day, Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day. Instructional staff is encouraged to use the assistance of local veterans and Medal of Honor recipients.²⁶

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1666 revises multiple provisions on veterans to expand benefits, revise the structure of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, and provide instruction to public K-12 students on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

CS/SB 1666 amends s. 295.21, F.S., to:

- Specify that the purpose of FIFV is to serve as the state's initial point of military transition assistance;
- Expand the duties of FIFV to require marketing, awareness, and outreach activities directed towards the target market, defined as members and spouses of the U.S. Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge; veterans with 36 months or less since discharge; and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves; and
- Limit the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to only one appointment from the body for which they preside, for the three members they may each appoint to the governing board of directors of FIFV.

²⁶ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The bill amends s. 295.22, F.S., to:

- Include in the purpose of the program to connect veterans and spouses with opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, training, and resources; to inspire veteran-owned small business; and to assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting veterans and spouses.
- Define as a secondary industry business a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have skills that are directly transferrable. Identifies these businesses as those in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.
- Define as a veteran either a person who, irrespective of discharge status, served in the active military, naval, or air service or a servicemember, a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty, the Florida National Guard, or the U.S. Reserve Forces.
- Clarify that a spouse is a person who is married to a veteran or an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran.
- Define a target industry business as a corporate headquarters business or any business with the features of future growth, stability, high wage, market and resource dependent, industrial base diversification, and positive economic impact and strengthening.
- Define as a target market members, and their spouses, of the U.S. Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge; veterans with 36 months or less since discharge; and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves.
- Tailor required marketing and recruiting efforts to direct them at veterans and their spouses within the target market, to include information related to how a veteran's military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business.
- Replace the role of FIFV assisting with information on industry certification with that of prioritizing a certificate, license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List, as is established by the state board, which is the board of directors of CareerSource Florida, Inc.; a federally created certification or license; and a skills-based certification or license as deemed relevant by FIFV.
- Authorize a participating business to receive a grant from any state program rather than identifying as the sole grant program the Quick Response Training Program.
- Authorize FIFV to use a portion of grant funds, as determined by FIFV, for veterans who are not active members of the U.S. Armed Forces for educational stipends while in training at a UF IFAS location within Florida, if the training is between 4 and 6 months in duration. The bill requires FIFV to enter into a grant agreement before funds may be expended.
- Redesignate the SkillBridge program as the SkillBridge initiative; incorporate references to target and secondary industries; and replace references to transitioning servicemembers with eligible veterans;
- Authorize FIFV to assist state agencies and other public entities with recruiting veterans and spouses;
- Encourage FIFV to collaborate with state agencies and other public entities to maximize access to and provide information on one website that, if possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact information, if available, for state agencies and other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

- Provide that outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals between agencies, entities, and FIFV on programs and initiatives that may be conducted include, but are not limited to, the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and the:
 - FDVA through access to benefits and assistance programs and the Hope Navigators Program.
 - Department of Commerce, through the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representatives; CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services; the Quick-Response Training Program; and Select Florida.
 - Department of Business and Professional Regulation, through reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.
 - Department of Education, through CAPE industry certifications and information related to earning postsecondary credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military.
 - DOH, through the Office of Veteran Licensure Services and the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.
- Further authorizes the FIFV to coordinate and collaborate with the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, the State University System, the Florida College System, the Florida Defense Support Task Force, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, and the Florida Talent Development Council.

Exemption on Filing Fees for Incorporation

The bill creates s. 295.25, F.S., to exempt veterans who are state residents from having to pay fees collected by the DOS for the specific filings of:

- Articles of organization;
- Articles of incorporation;
- A certificate of limited partnership;
- A partnership registration statement; or
- A designation of a registered agent.

Fees charged for filings, now exempted, are listed below.

Department of State Filing Fees		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

Expansion of No Cost Fee for Recreational License

The bill amends s. 379.353(1), F.S., to create a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses and permits for a disabled veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who was honorably discharged from service and who is certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater.

The veteran must provide proof of disability.

Fees charged for licenses, now exempted, are listed below.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

The no-cost license expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

Revision of Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The bill amends s. 381.78, F.S., to revise the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries structure to require:

- Two, rather than four persons with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two, rather than four persons with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two persons who have, or who are family members of persons who have or had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two veterans who served in the active military, naval, or air service; are honorably discharged or upgraded to an honorable discharge; and have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- Six persons who are physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, or representatives from support groups who have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries, and requires appointment by the State Surgeon General.

The bill provides for staggered terms.

The frequency of meetings by the council is increased from at least twice annually to at least quarterly, with meeting adjournment to be by unanimous consent.

Instruction on Veterans' Day and Memorial Day

The bill amends s. 1003.42(2), F.S., to add to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day. These lessons must take place on or before the holiday.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

A veteran who submits a business filing to the DOS will not have to pay a filing fee for certain filings.

A veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled, and applies for a hunting, fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit, will receive the license or permit without the payment of a state fee.

A veteran who is in training at a UF IFAS location within Florida may be eligible for an educational stipend from FIFV.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may result in an indeterminate negative fiscal impact due to the:

- Expansion of the duties of FIFV and the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program within the FDVA;
- Exemption of certain filing fees for veterans related to business incorporations and associated filings, which currently range from \$25 to \$965 per filing;
- Exemption of state fees on hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses, which each currently cost \$15.50, for a veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled; and
- Additional required instruction for middle and high school students at public schools.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 295.21, 295.22, 379.353, 381.78, 288.0001, and 1003.42.

This bill creates section 295.25, Florida Statutes.

This bill reenacts the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 379.3581 and 379.401.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 29, 2024:

The CS:

- For the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, the definition of a servicemember is added and defined as a person serving as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and U.S. Reserve Forces; a spouse is redefined to include an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran; and a veteran is defined as, irrespective of discharge status, a person who otherwise meets the definition of veteran in s. 1.01(14), F.S., or who is a servicemember.
- For a 50 percent or greater service-connected disabled veteran who is eligible for a no-cost hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license, the license expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

-
- For the advisory council on brain and spinal injuries, for each of the appointments that the Speaker of the House provides, the President of the Senate will have one appointment, so that each will have 1 appointment for each type of appointment, for a total of 5 appointments each.

B. Amendments:

None.



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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
01/29/2024	.	
	.	
	.	
	.	

The Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security (Collins) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete lines 130 - 448

and insert:

(b) "Servicemember" has the same meaning as in 250.01.

(c) "Spouse" means a person who is married to a veteran, or an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran.

(d) "Target industry business" is a business as defined in s. 288.005.

(e) "Target market" has the same meaning as in s.



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295.21(3)(a).

(f) "Veteran" means, irrespective of discharge status, a person who otherwise meets the definition of veteran in s. 1.01(14) or who is a servicemember.

(3) CREATION.—The Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is created within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to assist in connecting ~~linking~~ veterans or their spouses ~~in search of employment~~ with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and resources. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in this ~~the~~ state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans or their spouses and to inspire the growth and development of veteran-owned small businesses.

(4) ~~(3)~~ ADMINISTRATION.—Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall administer the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and perform all of the following functions:

(a) Conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses within the target market who reside in or ~~who~~ have an interest in relocating to this state and who are seeking employment. Marketing must include information related to how a veteran's military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business. Such efforts may include attending veteran job fairs and events, hosting events for veterans and their spouses or the business community, and using digital and social media and direct mail campaigns. The corporation shall also include such marketing as part of its main marketing campaign.

(b) Assist veterans or their spouses who reside in or



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relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with
target industry or secondary industry businesses. The
corporation shall offer skills assessments to veterans or their
spouses and assist them in establishing employment goals and
applying for and achieving gainful employment.

1. Assessment may include skill match information, skill
gap analysis, résumé creation, translation of military skills
into civilian workforce skills, and translation of military
achievements and experience into generally understood civilian
workforce skills.

2. Assistance may include providing the veteran or his or
her spouse with information on current workforce demand by
industry or geographic region, creating employment goals, and
aiding or teaching general knowledge related to completing
applications. ~~The corporation may provide information related to
industry certifications approved by the Department of Education
under s. 1008.44 as well as information related to earning
academic college credit at public postsecondary educational
institutions for college-level training and education acquired
in the military under s. 1004.096.~~

3. ~~The corporation shall encourage veterans or their
spouses to register with the state's job bank system and may
refer veterans to local one-stop career centers for further
services. The corporation shall provide each veteran with
information about state workforce programs and shall consolidate
information about all available resources on one website that,
if possible, includes a hyperlink to each resource's website and
contact information, if available.~~

4. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by



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electronic means, as determined by the corporation to be most efficient and best meet the needs of veterans or their spouses.

(c) Assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and veterans' spouses. The corporation shall provide services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable veteran applicants for employment. Suitable applicants include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job skills or may need additional training to meet the specific needs of a business. The corporation shall also provide information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.

(d) Create a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program. Grant funds may be used only in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs. Grants may fund specialized training specific to a particular business.

1. The program may prioritize ~~If~~ grant funds to be ~~are~~ used to provide a ~~technical~~ certificate, a license ~~licensure~~, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List pursuant to s. 445.004(4)(h); any federally created certifications or licenses; and any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by the corporation. ~~a degree~~, Funds may be allocated only upon a review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of accreditation and



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licensure. ~~Instruction funded through the program terminates when participants demonstrate competence at the level specified in the request but may not exceed 12 months. Preference shall be given to target industry businesses, as defined in s. 288.005, and to businesses in the defense supply, cloud virtualization, health care, or commercial aviation manufacturing industries.~~

2. Costs and expenditures are ~~shall be~~ limited to \$8,000 per veteran trainee. Qualified businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before receiving reimbursement from the corporation equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a permanent, full-time employee. Eligible costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- a. Tuition and fees.
- b. Books and classroom materials.
- c. Rental fees for facilities.

3. Before funds are allocated for a request pursuant to this section, the corporation shall prepare a grant agreement between the business requesting funds and the corporation. Such agreement must include, but need not be limited to:

a. Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct the instructional program, instructional program description, and any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.

b. Identification of the estimated duration of the instructional program.

c. Identification of all direct, training-related costs.

d. Identification of special program requirements that are not otherwise addressed in the agreement.

e. Permission to access aggregate information specific to the wages and performance of participants upon the completion of



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instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must specify that any evaluation published subsequent to the instruction may not identify the employer or any individual participant.

4. A business may receive a grant under any state program ~~the Quick-Response Training Program created under s. 288.047~~ and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

5. A portion of grant funds, as determined by the corporation, may be used for veterans who are not active members of the United States Armed Forces for educational stipends while training at any location of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences within this state. The corporation and the University of Florida shall enter into a grant agreement before funds are expended. The corporation must determine the amount of the stipend. The training for any individual may not be less than 4 months and not more than 6 months.

(e) Contract with one or more entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in this state which connects business leaders in the state with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs.

1. The corporation shall award each contract in accordance with the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 to one or more public or private entities that:

a. Demonstrate the ability to implement the program and the commitment of resources, including financial resources, to such programs.

b. Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran entrepreneurs.

c. As determined by the corporation, have been recognized



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for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to launch successful businesses in this ~~the~~ state.

2. Each contract must include performance metrics, including a focus on employment and business creation. The entity may also work with a university or college offering related programs to refer veterans or to provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables, networking opportunities, support of student organizations, speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

(f) Administer a ~~As the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge initiative program~~ for target industry and secondary industry ~~qualified~~ businesses in this state and for eligible veterans ~~transitioning servicemembers~~ who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state. In administering the initiative, the corporation shall:

1. Establish and maintain, as applicable, its certification for the SkillBridge initiative ~~program~~ or any other similar workforce training and transition programs established by the United States Department of Defense;

2. Educate businesses, business associations, and eligible veterans ~~transitioning servicemembers~~ on the SkillBridge initiative ~~program~~ and its benefits, and educate military command and personnel within the state on the opportunities available to eligible veterans ~~transitioning servicemembers~~ ~~through the SkillBridge program~~;

3. Assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled



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workforce training curricula under the SkillBridge initiative
~~program~~, including, but not limited to, apprenticeships,
internships, or fellowships; and

4. Match eligible veterans ~~transitioning servicemembers who~~
~~are deemed eligible for SkillBridge participation by their~~
~~military command~~ with training opportunities offered by the
corporation or participating businesses, with the intent of
having them ~~transitioning servicemembers~~ achieve gainful
employment in this state upon completion of their SkillBridge
training.

~~(g) Assist veterans and their spouses in accessing~~
~~training, education, and employment in health care professions.~~

~~(h) Coordinate with the Office of Veteran Licensure~~
~~Services within the Department of Health to assist veterans and~~
~~their spouses in obtaining licensure pursuant to s. 456.024.~~

(5) COLLABORATION.—The corporation may assist state
agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their
workforce. The corporation is encouraged to, and may collaborate
with state agencies and other entities in efforts to, maximize
access to and provide information on one website that, if
possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact
information, if available, for state agencies and other entities
that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other
resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

(a) Outreach, information exchange, marketing, and
referrals between agencies, entities, and the corporation
regarding programs and initiatives that may be conducted
include, but are not limited to, the Veterans Employment and
Training Services Program and those within any of the following:



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1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

b. Hope Navigators Program.

2. The Department of Commerce:

a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representatives.

b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services.

c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

d. Select Florida.

3. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation, reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.

4. The Department of Education:

a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military under s. 1004.096.

5. The Department of Health:

a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.

(b) The corporation may coordinate and collaborate with the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, the State University System, the Florida College System, the Florida Defense Support Task Force, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, and the Florida Talent Development Council, as necessary.



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Section 3. Section 295.25, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

295.25 Veterans exempt from certain filing fees.—The Department of State may not charge veterans who reside in this state the applicable fees for filing articles of organization, articles of incorporation, a certificate of limited partnership, or a partnership registration statement, or for the designation of a registered agent, if applicable, as provided in s. 605.0213, s. 607.0122, s. 617.0122, s. 620.1109, or s. 620.81055.

Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 379.353, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

379.353 Recreational licenses and permits; exemptions from fees and requirements.—

(1) The commission shall issue without fee hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses and permits ~~shall be issued without fee~~ to any resident who is certified or determined to be:

(a) ~~To be~~ Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of workers' compensation under chapter 440 as verified by an order of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the carrier providing workers' compensation benefits, or to be totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board, by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued under ~~the provisions of~~ s. 295.17, upon proof of such certification or determination ~~same~~. Any license issued under this paragraph after January 1, 1997, expires after 5 years and must be



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reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

(b) ~~To be~~ Disabled by the United States Social Security Administration, upon proof of such certification or determination ~~same~~. Any license issued under this paragraph after October 1, 1999, expires after 2 years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every 2 years thereafter.

(c) A disabled veteran of the United States Armed Forces who was honorably discharged upon separation from service and who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater, upon proof of such certification or determination. Any license issued under this paragraph after July 1, 2024, expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

A disability license issued after July 1, 1997, and before July 1, 2000, retains the rights vested thereunder until the license has expired.

Section 5. Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of section 381.78, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

381.78 Advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries.—

(1) There is created within the department a 16-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council shall be composed of a minimum of:

(a) Two ~~four~~ individuals who have brain injuries or are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, with one individual appointed by the President of the Senate and the



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other individual appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives., ~~a minimum of four~~

(b) Two individuals who have spinal cord injuries or are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, with one individual appointed by the President of the Senate and the other individual appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives., ~~and a minimum of~~

(c) Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries, with one individual appointed by the President of the Senate and the other individual appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(d) Two individuals who have, or who are family members of individuals who have or had, a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports, with one individual appointed the President of the Senate and the other individual appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(e) Two veterans as defined in s. 1.01(14) who have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans, with one veteran or family member appointed by the President of the Senate and the other veteran or family member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(f) Six individuals, appointed by the State Surgeon General, who are ~~The balance of the council members shall be~~ physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, ~~or and~~ representatives



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from support groups who ~~that~~ have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries.

(2) ~~Members of the council shall be appointed to serve by the State Surgeon General.~~ All members' terms shall be staggered terms of ~~for~~ 4 years. An

===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete line 38

and insert:

certain disabled veterans; providing that specified licenses issued to such veterans expire periodically and must be reissued upon request after such time period; amending s. 381.78, F.S.;

By Senator Collins

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1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to veterans; amending s. 295.21, F.S.;
 3 revising the purpose of Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.;
 4 revising the duties of the corporation to require that
 5 it conduct specified activities directed toward its
 6 target market; defining the term "target market";
 7 deleting obsolete language; providing that the
 8 President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House
 9 of Representatives may each appoint only one member
 10 from his or her chamber to the corporation's board of
 11 directors; making technical changes; amending s.
 12 295.22, F.S.; defining terms; revising the purpose of
 13 the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program;
 14 revising the functions that Florida Is For Veterans,
 15 Inc., must perform in administering a specified
 16 program; authorizing the program to prioritize grant
 17 funds; revising the uses of specified grant funds;
 18 authorizing a business to receive certain other grant
 19 funds in addition to specified grant funds;
 20 authorizing the use of grant funds to provide for a
 21 specified educational stipend; requiring the
 22 corporation and the University of Florida to enter
 23 into a grant agreement before certain funds are
 24 expended; requiring the corporation to determine the
 25 amount of the stipend; providing that specified
 26 training must occur for a specified duration;
 27 authorizing the corporation to provide certain
 28 assistance to state agencies and entities, to provide
 29 a website that has relevant hyperlinks, and to

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CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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30 collaborate with specified state agencies and other
 31 entities for specified purposes; conforming provisions
 32 to changes made by the act; making technical changes;
 33 creating s. 295.25, F.S.; prohibiting the Department
 34 of State from charging veterans who reside in this
 35 state fees for the filing of specified documents;
 36 amending s. 379.353, F.S.; providing free hunting,
 37 freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses to
 38 certain disabled veterans; amending s. 381.78, F.S.;
 39 revising the membership, appointment, and meetings of
 40 the advisory council on brain and spinal cord
 41 injuries; amending s. 1003.42, F.S.; requiring
 42 instruction on the history and importance of Veterans'
 43 Day and Memorial Day; requiring that certain
 44 instruction consist of two 45-minute lessons that must
 45 occur within a certain timeframe; amending s.
 46 288.0001, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference;
 47 reenacting ss. 379.3581(2)(b) and 379.401(2)(b) and
 48 (3)(b), F.S., relating to special authorization
 49 hunting licenses and the suspension and forfeiture of
 50 licenses and permits, respectively, to incorporate the
 51 amendment made to s. 379.353, F.S., in references
 52 thereto; providing an effective date.

54 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

55
 56 Section 1. Subsection (2), paragraph (a) of subsection (3),
 57 and paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of section 295.21, Florida
 58 Statutes, are amended to read:

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CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—

(2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the corporation is to serve as the state's initial point of military transition assistance dedicated to promoting ~~promote~~ Florida as a veteran-friendly state helping that seeks to provide veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and promoting that promotes the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community. The corporation shall encourage retired and recently separated military personnel to remain in this ~~the~~ state or to make this ~~the~~ state their permanent residence. The corporation shall promote the value of military skill sets to businesses in this ~~the~~ state, assist in tailoring the training of veterans and their spouses to match the needs of the employment marketplace, and enhance the entrepreneurial skills of veterans and their spouses.

(3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:

(a) Conduct marketing, awareness, and outreach activities directed toward its target market. As used in this section, the term "target market" means those members, and their spouses, of the United States Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves ~~research to identify the target market and the educational and employment needs of those in the target market. The corporation shall contract with at least one entity pursuant to the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 and the provisions of s. 295.187 to perform the research. Such entity must have experience conducting market research on the veteran demographic. The corporation shall seek input from the Florida~~

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~~Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on the scope, process, and focus of such research.~~

(4) GOVERNANCE.—

(a) The corporation shall be governed by a nine-member board of directors. The Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint three members to the board. In making appointments, the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives must consider representation by active or retired military personnel and their spouses, representing a range of ages and persons with expertise in business, education, marketing, and information management. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives may each appoint only one member from the body over which he or she presides.

Section 2. Section 295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

295.22 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—The Legislature finds that the state has a compelling interest in ensuring that each veteran or his or her spouse who is a resident of this ~~the~~ state finds employment that meets his or her professional goals and receives the training or education necessary to meet those goals. The Legislature also finds that connecting dedicated, well-trained veterans with businesses that need a dedicated, well-trained workforce is of paramount importance. The Legislature recognizes that veterans or their spouses may not currently have the skills to meet the workforce needs of Florida employers and may require assistance in obtaining additional

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workforce training or in transitioning their skills to meet the demands of the marketplace. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program coordinate and meet the needs of veterans and their spouses and the business community to enhance the economy of this state.

(2) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section, the term:

(a) “Secondary industry business” is a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have directly transferrable skills. These businesses are in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.

(b) “Spouse” means a person who is married to a veteran, or a person who was married to a veteran killed in action and is not remarried.

(c) “Target industry business” is a business as defined in s. 288.005.

(d) “Target market” has the same meaning as in s. 295.21(3)(a).

(e) “Veteran” means a person who the definition of veteran in s. 1.01(14) or is an active or former member of the National Guard or United States Coast Guard, including reserve components.

(3) CREATION.—The Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is created within the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to assist in connecting linking veterans or their spouses ~~in search of employment~~ with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and with opportunities for entrepreneurship

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education, training, and resources. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in ~~this the~~ state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans or their spouses and to inspire the growth and development of veteran-owned small businesses.

~~(4)(3)~~ ADMINISTRATION.—Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall administer the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and perform all of the following functions:

(a) Conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses within the target market who reside in or ~~who~~ have an interest in relocating to this state and who are seeking employment. Marketing must include information related to how a veteran’s military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business. Such efforts may include attending veteran job fairs and events, hosting events for veterans and their spouses or the business community, and using digital and social media and direct mail campaigns. The corporation shall also include such marketing as part of its main marketing campaign.

(b) Assist veterans or their spouses who reside in or relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with target industry or secondary industry businesses. The corporation shall offer skills assessments to veterans or their spouses and assist them in establishing employment goals and applying for and achieving gainful employment.

1. Assessment may include skill match information, skill gap analysis, résumé creation, translation of military skills into civilian workforce skills, and translation of military achievements and experience into generally understood civilian

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workforce skills.

2. Assistance may include providing the veteran or his or her spouse with information on current workforce demand by industry or geographic region, creating employment goals, and aiding or teaching general knowledge related to completing applications. ~~The corporation may provide information related to industry certifications approved by the Department of Education under s. 1008.44 as well as information related to earning academic college credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military under s. 1004.096.~~

3. ~~The corporation shall encourage veterans or their spouses to register with the state's job bank system and may refer veterans to local one-stop career centers for further services. The corporation shall provide each veteran with information about state workforce programs and shall consolidate information about all available resources on one website that, if possible, includes a hyperlink to each resource's website and contact information, if available.~~

4. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by electronic means, as determined by the corporation to be most efficient and best meet the needs of veterans or their spouses.

(c) Assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and veterans' spouses. The corporation shall provide services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable veteran applicants for employment. Suitable applicants include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job skills or may need additional training to meet

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the specific needs of a business. The corporation shall also provide information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.

(d) Create a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program. Grant funds may be used only in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs. Grants may fund specialized training specific to a particular business.

1. The program may prioritize ~~If grant funds to be are~~ used to provide a ~~technical~~ certificate, a license licensure, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List pursuant to s. 445.004(4)(h); any federally created certifications or licenses; and any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by the corporation. ~~a degree,~~ Funds may be allocated only upon a review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of accreditation and licensure. ~~Instruction funded through the program terminates when participants demonstrate competence at the level specified in the request but may not exceed 12 months. Preference shall be given to target industry businesses, as defined in s. 288.005, and to businesses in the defense supply, cloud virtualization, health care, or commercial aviation manufacturing industries.~~

2. Costs and expenditures are ~~shall be~~ limited to \$8,000 per veteran trainee. Qualified businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before receiving

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reimbursement from the corporation equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a permanent, full-time employee. Eligible costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- a. Tuition and fees.
- b. Books and classroom materials.
- c. Rental fees for facilities.

3. Before funds are allocated for a request pursuant to this section, the corporation shall prepare a grant agreement between the business requesting funds and the corporation. Such agreement must include, but need not be limited to:

- a. Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct the instructional program, instructional program description, and any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.
- b. Identification of the estimated duration of the instructional program.
- c. Identification of all direct, training-related costs.
- d. Identification of special program requirements that are not otherwise addressed in the agreement.
- e. Permission to access aggregate information specific to the wages and performance of participants upon the completion of instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must specify that any evaluation published subsequent to the instruction may not identify the employer or any individual participant.

4. A business may receive a grant under any state program ~~the Quick-Response Training Program created under s. 288.047~~ and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

5. A portion of grant funds, as determined by the corporation, may be used for veterans who are not active members of the United States Armed Forces for educational stipends while

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training at any location of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences within this state. The corporation and the University of Florida shall enter into a grant agreement before funds are expended. The corporation must determine the amount of the stipend. The training for any individual may not be less than 4 months and not more than 6 months.

(e) Contract with one or more entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in this state which connects business leaders in the state with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs.

1. The corporation shall award each contract in accordance with the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 to one or more public or private entities that:

- a. Demonstrate the ability to implement the program and the commitment of resources, including financial resources, to such programs.
- b. Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran entrepreneurs.
- c. As determined by the corporation, have been recognized for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to launch successful businesses in this ~~the~~ state.

2. Each contract must include performance metrics, including a focus on employment and business creation. The entity may also work with a university or college offering related programs to refer veterans or to provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables, networking

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opportunities, support of student organizations, speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

(f) ~~Administer a~~ As the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge initiative program for target industry and secondary industry qualified businesses in this state and for eligible veterans transitioning servicemembers who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state. In administering the initiative, the corporation shall:

1. Establish and maintain, as applicable, its certification for the SkillBridge initiative program or any other similar workforce training and transition programs established by the United States Department of Defense;

2. Educate businesses, business associations, and eligible veterans transitioning servicemembers on the SkillBridge initiative program and its benefits, and educate military command and personnel within the state on the opportunities available to eligible veterans transitioning servicemembers ~~through the SkillBridge program~~;

3. Assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled workforce training curricula under the SkillBridge initiative program, including, but not limited to, apprenticeships, internships, or fellowships; and

4. Match eligible veterans transitioning servicemembers ~~who are deemed eligible for SkillBridge participation by their military command~~ with training opportunities offered by the corporation or participating businesses, with the intent of having them transitioning servicemembers achieve gainful employment in this state upon completion of their SkillBridge

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training.

~~(g) Assist veterans and their spouses in accessing training, education, and employment in health care professions.~~

~~(h) Coordinate with the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health to assist veterans and their spouses in obtaining licensure pursuant to s. 456.024.~~

(5) COLLABORATION.—The corporation may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforce. The corporation is encouraged to, and may collaborate with state agencies and other entities in efforts to, maximize access to and provide information on one website that, if possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact information, if available, for state agencies and other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

(a) Outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals between agencies, entities, and the corporation regarding programs and initiatives that may be conducted include, but are not limited to, the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and those within any of the following:

1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

b. Hope Navigators Program.

2. The Department of Commerce:

a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representatives.

b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services.

c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

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349 d. Select Florida.
 350 3. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation,
 351 reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee
 352 waivers.
 353 4. The Department of Education:
 354 a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.
 355 b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at
 356 public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level
 357 training and education acquired in the military under s.
 358 1004.096.
 359 5. The Department of Health:
 360 a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.
 361 b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online
 362 Response expedited licensing.
 363 (b) The corporation may coordinate and collaborate with the
 364 Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, the State
 365 University System, the Florida College System, the Florida
 366 Defense Support Task Force, the Florida Small Business
 367 Development Center Network, and the Florida Talent Development
 368 Council, as necessary.
 369 Section 3. Section 295.25, Florida Statutes, is created to
 370 read:
 371 295.25 Veterans exempt from certain filing fees.—The
 372 Department of State may not charge veterans who reside in this
 373 state the applicable fees for filing articles of organization,
 374 articles of incorporation, a certificate of limited partnership,
 375 or a partnership registration statement, or for the designation
 376 of a registered agent, if applicable, as provided in s.
 377 605.0213, s. 607.0122, s. 617.0122, s. 620.1109, or s.

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CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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378 620.81055.
 379 Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 379.353, Florida
 380 Statutes, is amended to read:
 381 379.353 Recreational licenses and permits; exemptions from
 382 fees and requirements.—
 383 (1) The commission shall issue without fee hunting,
 384 freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses and permits
 385 ~~shall be issued without fee~~ to any resident who is certified or
 386 determined to be:
 387 (a) ~~To be~~ Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of
 388 workers' compensation under chapter 440 as verified by an order
 389 of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the
 390 carrier providing workers' compensation benefits, or to be
 391 totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement
 392 Board, by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or
 393 its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed
 394 Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued under
 395 ~~the provisions of s. 295.17, upon proof of such certification or~~
 396 determination same. Any license issued under this paragraph
 397 after January 1, 1997, expires after 5 years and must be
 398 reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.
 399 (b) ~~To be~~ Disabled by the United States Social Security
 400 Administration, upon proof of such certification or
 401 determination same. Any license issued under this paragraph
 402 after October 1, 1999, expires after 2 years and must be
 403 reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every 2
 404 years thereafter.
 405 (c) A disabled veteran of the United States Armed Forces
 406 who was honorably discharged upon separation from service and

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CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater, upon proof of such certification or determination.

A disability license issued after July 1, 1997, and before July 1, 2000, retains the rights vested thereunder until the license has expired.

Section 5. Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of section 381.78, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

381.78 Advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries.—

(1) There is created within the department a 16-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council shall be composed of a minimum of:

(a) Two ~~four~~ individuals who have brain injuries or are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, 7 ~~a minimum of four~~

(b) Two individuals who have spinal cord injuries or are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, 7 ~~and a minimum of~~

(c) Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries.

(d) Two individuals who have, or who are family members of individuals who have or had, a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports.

(e) Two veterans as defined in s. 1.01(14) who have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy,

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or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans.

(f) ~~Six individuals who are~~ The balance of the council members shall be physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, ~~or and~~ representatives from support groups ~~who that~~ have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries.

(2) Members of the council specified in paragraphs (1) (a)–(e) shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Members of the council specified in paragraph (1) (f) shall be appointed ~~to serve~~ by the State Surgeon General. All members' terms shall be staggered terms of ~~for~~ 4 years. An individual may not serve more than two terms. Any council member who is unwilling or unable to properly fulfill the duties of the office shall be succeeded by an individual chosen by the State Surgeon General to serve out the unexpired balance of the replaced council member's term. If the unexpired balance of the replaced council member's term is less than 18 months, ~~then,~~ notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, the succeeding council member may be reappointed by the State Surgeon General twice.

(3) The council shall meet at least quarterly and may adjourn a meeting only by unanimous consent ~~two times annually~~.

Section 6. Paragraph (u) of subsection (2) of section 1003.42, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.42 Required instruction.—

(2) Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education

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and the district school board, shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:

(u) 1. In order to encourage patriotism, the sacrifices that ~~veterans and~~ Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide. Such instruction must occur on or before Medal of Honor Day, ~~Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day.~~ Members of the instructional staff are encouraged to use the assistance of local veterans and Medal of Honor recipients when practicable.

2. The history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day. Such instruction must include two 45-minute lessons that occur on or before the respective holidays.

The State Board of Education is encouraged to adopt standards and pursue assessment of the requirements of this subsection. Instructional programming that incorporates the values of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor and that is offered as part of a social studies, English Language Arts, or other schoolwide character building and veteran awareness initiative meets the requirements of paragraph (u).

Section 7. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of section 288.0001, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

288.0001 Economic Development Programs Evaluation.—The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) shall develop and present to the Governor, the President of the

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Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairs of the legislative appropriations committees the Economic Development Programs Evaluation.

(2) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and OPPAGA shall provide a detailed analysis of economic development programs as provided in the following schedule:

(c) By January 1, 2016, and every 3 years thereafter, an analysis of the following:

1. The tax exemption for semiconductor, defense, or space technology sales established under s. 212.08(5)(j).

2. The Military Base Protection Program established under s. 288.980.

3. The Quick Response Training Program established under s. 288.047.

4. The Incumbent Worker Training Program established under s. 445.003.

5. The direct-support organization and international trade and business development programs established or funded under s. 288.012 or s. 288.826.

6. The program established under s. 295.22(3) ~~s. 295.22(2)~~.

Section 8. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 379.353, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 379.3581, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

379.3581 Hunter safety course; requirements; penalty.—

(2)

(b) A person born on or after June 1, 1975, who has not successfully completed a hunter safety course may apply to the commission for a special authorization to hunt under

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supervision. The special authorization for supervised hunting shall be designated on any license or permit required under this chapter for a person to take game or fur-bearing animals. A person issued a license with a special authorization to hunt under supervision must hunt under the supervision of, and in the presence of, a person 21 years of age or older who is licensed to hunt pursuant to s. 379.354 or who is exempt from licensing requirements or eligible for a free license pursuant to s. 379.353.

Section 9. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 379.353, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section 379.401, Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

379.401 Penalties and violations; civil penalties for noncriminal infractions; criminal penalties; suspension and forfeiture of licenses and permits.—

(2) LEVEL TWO VIOLATIONS.—

(b)1. A person who commits a Level Two violation but who has not been convicted of a Level Two or higher violation within the past 3 years commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. Unless the stricter penalties in subparagraph 3. or subparagraph 4. apply, a person who commits a Level Two violation within 3 years after a previous conviction for a Level Two or higher violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of \$250.

3. Unless the stricter penalties in subparagraph 4. apply,

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a person who commits a Level Two violation within 5 years after two previous convictions for a Level Two or higher violation, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of \$500 and a suspension of any recreational license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for 1 year. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the privilege to obtain such license or permit and the suspension of the ability to exercise any privilege granted under any exemption in s. 379.353.

4. A person who commits a Level Two violation within 10 years after three previous convictions for a Level Two or higher violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of \$750 and a suspension of any recreational license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for 3 years. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the privilege to obtain such license or permit and the suspension of the ability to exercise any privilege granted under s. 379.353. If the recreational license or permit being suspended was an annual license or permit, any privileges under ss. 379.353 and 379.354 may not be acquired for a 3-year period following the date of the violation.

(3) LEVEL THREE VIOLATIONS.—

(b)1. A person who commits a Level Three violation but who has not been convicted of a Level Three or higher violation within the past 10 years commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. A person who commits a Level Three violation within 10 years after a previous conviction for a Level Three or higher

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violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable
as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum
mandatory fine of \$750 and a suspension of any recreational
license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for the remainder of
the period for which the license or permit was issued up to 3
years. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the
privilege to obtain such license or permit and the ability to
exercise any privilege granted under s. 379.353. If the
recreational license or permit being suspended was an annual
license or permit, any privileges under ss. 379.353 and 379.354
may not be acquired for a 3-year period following the date of
the violation.

3. A person who commits a violation of s. 379.354(17) shall
receive a mandatory fine of \$1,000. Any privileges under ss.
379.353 and 379.354 may not be acquired for a 5-year period
following the date of the violation.

Section 10. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.

1/29/24

Meeting Date

Military and Veterans Affairs,

Committee

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

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

SB 1666

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name **Bill Helmich**

Phone **850-251-3126**

Address **303 Johns Drive**

Email **bill@helmichconsulting.com**

Street

Tallahassee

FL

32301

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:

VFW / American Legion

☐

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)

1/29/24

Meeting Date

Military & Vets Affairs

Committee

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

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

1666

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name **Eric King** **VFW**

Phone **850.445.1077**

Address **6119 Ox Bottom Manor Dr.**
Street

Email **ericking@comcast.net**

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)



The Florida Senate

Committee Agenda Request

To: Senator Tom Wright, Chair
Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Subject: Committee Agenda Request

Date: January 15, 2024

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill # 1666**, relating to Veterans, be placed on the:

- ☐ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☒ next committee agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "J. Collins", is written over a horizontal line.

Senator Jay Collins
Florida Senate, District 14

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: SB 1720

INTRODUCER: Senator Rodriguez

SUBJECT: Marine Encroachment on Military Operations

DATE: January 26, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Hunter	Ryon	CA	Favorable
2.	Ingram	Proctor	MS	Favorable
3.			RC	

I. Summary:

SB 1720 adds various annexes and a range to the list of major military installations and ranges that, due to their mission and activities, have a greater potential for experiencing compatibility and coordination issues with local government planning than others.

These include the annexes across Boca Chica Key and Key West as well as the Fleming Bay/Patton Water Drop Zone training range used by the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School. Naval Air Station Key West associated with Monroe County and Key West is currently on the list, however the annexes and range are not.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

Comprehensive Plans and Plan Amendments

In 1985, the Legislature passed the Growth Management Act, which required every city and county to create and implement a comprehensive plan to guide future development.¹ A local government's comprehensive plan outlines the needs and locations for future public facilities, including roads, water and wastewater infrastructure, residential neighborhoods, parks, schools, and commercial and industrial developments.²

¹ Chapter 85-55, Laws of Fla.

² Section 163.3177, F.S.

All development, both public and private, and all development orders³ approved by local governments must be consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan.⁴ Among the many components of a comprehensive plan is a land use element designating proposed future general distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land.⁵ Specified use designations include those for residential, commercial, industry, agriculture, recreation, conservation, education, and public facilities.⁶

The future land use plan and plan amendments must be based upon surveys, studies, and data regarding the area, as applicable, including the compatibility of uses on lands adjacent to or in close proximity to military installations.⁷

In 2011, the Legislature bifurcated the process for approving comprehensive plan amendments.⁸ Plan amendments are now placed into either the "Expedited State Review Process" or the "State Coordinated Review Process."⁹ The two processes operate in much the same way; however, the State Coordinated Review Process provides a longer review period and requires all agency comments to be coordinated by the Department of Commerce (Commerce), rather than communicated directly to the permitting local government by each individual reviewing agency.

Under both processes, a proposed comprehensive plan or plan amendment must receive a public hearing by the local governing body before it may be transmitted to the state for review. First, the local planning board must hold a public hearing at which it makes a recommendation to the local governing body on adoption of the plan or plan amendment.¹⁰ Then, the local governing body must hold a public hearing to consider transmittal of the proposed plan or plan amendment.¹¹

If a majority of the local governing body members present at the hearing approve such transmittal, the plan or amendment must be transmitted within 10 working days to the following state and local governmental entities, known as "reviewing agencies":

- Commerce, designated as the "state land planning agency";¹²
- The appropriate regional planning council;
- The appropriate water management district;
- The Department of Environmental Protection;
- The Department of State;
- The Department of Transportation;
- The Department of Education, if plan amendments relate to public schools;

³ "Development order" means any order granting, denying, or granting with conditions an application for a development permit. See s. 163.3164(15), F.S. "Development permit" includes any building permit, zoning permit, subdivision approval, rezoning, certification, special exception, variance, or any other official action of local government having the effect of permitting the development of land. See s. 163.3164(16), F.S.

⁴ Section 163.3194(3), F.S.

⁵ Section 163.3177(6)(a), F.S.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Section 163.3177(6)(2)(f), F.S.

⁸ Chapter 2011-139, s. 17, Laws of Fla.

⁹ Section 163.3184(3) and (4), F.S.

¹⁰ Sections 163.3174(4)(a), F.S.

¹¹ Section 163.3184(11), F.S.

¹² Section 163.3164(44), F.S.

- The commanding officer of an affected military installation;
- The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, in the case of county plans and plan amendments; and
- The county in which the municipality is located, in the case of municipal plans and plan amendments.¹³

The reviewing agencies and certain other government entities may provide comments to the local government regarding a plan or plan amendment. State agencies may only comment on important state resources and facilities that will be adversely impacted by a plan amendment, if adopted.¹⁴ Comments provided by state agencies must state with specificity how a plan amendment will adversely impact an important state resource or facility and must identify measures the local government may take to eliminate, reduce, or mitigate the adverse impacts.¹⁵

Under the expedited process, these comments must be provided directly to the local government not later than 30 days after receipt of the plan amendment.¹⁶ Alternatively, the state coordinated review requires agencies to provide comments to Commerce.¹⁷ Commerce then has a total of 60 days from receipt to provide the local government with a report containing the state's objections, recommendations, and comments.¹⁸

After the local government receives the comments made by the reviewing agencies, whether directly from the agencies or through the report issued by Commerce, the local governing body must hold a second public hearing to approve or deny the plan or plan amendment.¹⁹ The second public hearing must be conducted within 180 days after the agency comments are received. Generally, if a local government fails to hold the second public hearing within 180 days after receipt of agency comments, the plan amendment is deemed withdrawn.²⁰

Exchange of Information between Local Governments and Military Installations

Section 163.3175, F.S., provides the following legislative findings relating to land use around military installations:

- Incompatible development of land close to military installations can adversely affect the ability of such an installation to carry out its mission;
- Such development also threatens the public safety because of the possibility of accidents occurring within the areas surrounding a military installation;
- The economic vitality of a community is affected when military operations and missions must relocate because of incompatible urban encroachment; and

¹³ Section 163.3184(1)(c) and (3)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁴ Section 163.3184(3)(b)2. and (4)(c), F.S. Commerce has special requirements for providing comments on plans or plan amendments following the state coordinated review process.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Section 163.3184(3)(b)2., F.S.

¹⁷ Section 163.3184(4)(c) and (d), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 163.3184(4)(d), F.S.; see Commerce, *State Coordinated Review Amendment Process*, http://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/2015-community-development/community-planning/comp-plan/statecoordinatedreviewprocessflowchart.pdf?sfvrsn=d6a766b0_2 (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

¹⁹ Section 163.3184(11), F.S.

²⁰ Section 163.3184(3)(c)1. and (4)(e)1., F.S. This 180-day timeframe may be extended by agreement as long as notice is provided to Commerce and any affected person that provided comments on the plan amendment. Also, an exception exists for developments of regional impact.

- Therefore, it is desirable for the local governments in the state to cooperate with military installations to encourage compatible land use, help prevent incompatible encroachment, and facilitate the continued presence of major military installations in this state.

The section identifies sixteen major military installations that, due to their mission and activities, have a greater potential for experiencing compatibility and coordination issues than others.²¹ It also identifies proximate local governments and requires those local governments to transmit to the commanding officer of the relevant associated installation or installations the following:

- Information relating to proposed changes to the local government's comprehensive plan or land development regulations which, if approved, would affect the intensity, density, or use of the land adjacent to or in close proximity to the military installation; and
- At the request of the commanding officer, copies of applications for development orders requesting a variance or waiver from height or lighting restrictions or noise attenuation reduction requirements within areas defined in the local government's comprehensive plan as being in a zone of influence of the military installation.²²

Each affected local government must provide the military installation an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed changes.²³ The commanding officer or his or her designee may provide to the affected local government advisory comments, data, and analyses on the effect the proposed changes may have on the mission of the military installation.²⁴ In making a determination on the proposed changes, the affected local government must consider and weigh the strategic mission of the base, public safety, and economic vitality associated with the base's operations, while also respecting private property rights and avoiding undue restrictions on those rights.²⁵

All comments on comprehensive plan amendments must be forwarded to the state land planning agency.²⁶ To facilitate the exchange of information, a representative of a military installation acting on behalf of all military installations within that jurisdiction serves as a nonvoting member of the county's or affected local government's land planning or zoning board.²⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 163.3175, F.S., to add various annexes and a range to the list of major military installations and ranges that, due to their mission and activities, have a greater potential for experiencing compatibility and coordination issues with local government planning than others.

These include the various annexes across Boca Chica Key and Key West as well as the Fleming Bay/Patton Water Drop Zone training range used by the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School. Naval Air Station Key West associated with Monroe County and Key West is currently on the list, however the annexes and range are not.

²¹ Section 163.3175(2)(a)-(p), F.S.

²² Section 163.3175(4), F.S.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ Section 163.3175(5), F.S.

²⁵ Section 163.3175(6), F.S.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Section 163.3175(7), F.S.

The bill adds the term “ranges” to clarify that the exchange of information is also between local governments and military ranges. This addition conforms to the new and existing language regarding the list of compatibility and coordination issues with local government planning. Currently, section 163.3175, F.S., speaks to the compatibility of military installations only.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 163.3175 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

By Senator Rodriguez

40-01071A-24

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to marine encroachment on military operations; amending s. 163.3175, F.S.; requiring local governments to cooperate with certain major military installations and ranges to encourage compatible land use in associated areas; making technical changes; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (2) of section 163.3175, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

163.3175 Legislative findings on compatibility of development with military installations; exchange of information between local governments and military installations and ranges.—

(2) Certain major military installations and ranges, due to their mission and activities, have a greater potential for experiencing compatibility and coordination issues than others. Consequently, this section and ~~the provisions in s.~~

163.3177(6) (a), relating to compatibility of land development with military installations, apply to specific affected local governments in proximity to and in association with specific military installations and ranges, as follows:

(a) Avon Park Air Force Range, associated with Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola, and Polk Counties and Avon Park, Sebring, and Frostproof.

(b) Camp Blanding, associated with Clay, Bradford, and Putnam Counties.

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CODING: Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

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(c) Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field, associated with Gulf, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton Counties and Cinco Bayou, Crestview, Destin, DeFuniak Springs, Fort Walton Beach, Freeport, Laurel Hill, Mary Esther, Niceville, Shalimar, and Valparaiso.

(d) Homestead Air Reserve Base, associated with Miami-Dade County and Homestead.

(e) Jacksonville Training Range Complex, associated with Lake, Marion, Putnam, and Volusia Counties.

(f) MacDill Air Force Base, associated with Tampa.

(g) Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Marine Corps Support Facility-Blount Island, and outlying landing field Whitehouse, associated with Jacksonville.

(h) Naval Air Station Key West, including various annexes across Boca Chica Key and Key West as well as the Fleming Bay/Patton Water Drop Zone training range used by the Army Special Forces Underwater Operations School, associated with Monroe County and Key West.

(i) Naval Support Activity Orlando, including Bugg Spring and Naval Ordnance Test Unit, associated with Orange County and Orlando.

(j) Naval Support Activity Panama City, associated with Bay County, Panama City, and Panama City Beach.

(k) Naval Air Station Pensacola, associated with Escambia County.

(l) Naval Air Station Whiting Field and its outlying landing fields, associated with Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties.

(m) Naval Station Mayport, associated with Atlantic Beach

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and Jacksonville.

(n) Patrick Space Force Base and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, associated with Brevard County and Satellite Beach.

(o) Tyndall Air Force Base, associated with Bay County and Mexico Beach and Parker.

(p) United States Southern Command, associated with Miami-Dade County and Doral.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.



The Florida Senate

Committee Agenda Request

To: Senator Tom A. Wright, Chair
Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Subject: Committee Agenda Request

Date: January 23, 2024

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #1720**, relating to Marine Encroachment on Military Operations, be placed on the:

- ☐ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☒ next committee agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AmR", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez
Florida Senate, District 40

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: SB 1732

INTRODUCER: Senator Wright

SUBJECT: Veterans' Assistance

DATE: January 26, 2024

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	Proctor	MS	Favorable
2.			AHS	
3.			FP	

I. Summary:

SB 1732 enhances and expands the current role of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) in conducting outreach of services and benefits for veterans and their families or survivors. Subject to a \$500,000 annual appropriation, the FDVA must expand its Internet-based, mobile application, print, social media, and in-person outreach programs for the purpose of connecting veterans and their families or survivors with earned services, benefits, and support beyond existing efforts.

The FDVA must annually host at least two public events to disseminate information on benefits and services to in-person and virtual attendees. Information disseminated must include, but is not limited to, educational, medical, insurance, and disability benefits.

The bill requires the FDVA to annually submit a report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report must include the number of public events hosted by the FDVA, the number of attendees at each event, and other information the FDVA deems necessary.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

Veterans in Florida

Other than California and Texas, Florida has the third largest population of veterans.¹ More than 1.4 million veterans reside in the state, which is 12 percent of the state's population of adults aged 18 and over.² Additionally, Florida has the second largest population of veterans who are

¹ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Our Veterans*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/our-veterans/> (last visited Jan. 17, 2024).

² *Id.*

women, at more than 168,000. Women veterans are one of the fastest growing among the veterans' population.³

State Benefits for Veterans

In addition to federal benefits, veterans in the state have available a multitude of benefits.

The FDVA educates and provides assistance to veterans on accessing services and benefits in housing, health care, disability claims, education, burial benefits, and employment including veterans' preference.⁴

The FDVA also annually produces the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide, which helps connect veterans and their families with earned federal and state benefits, services and support. It also contains useful phone numbers and website addresses to provide additional information to veterans, and a comprehensive listing of current services and benefits available to veterans in the state.⁵

Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

The FDVA has a key role in the connection of veterans and their families with earned benefits, services, and support, and has an outreach, marketing and branding campaign currently underway to make those connections. The FDVA campaign employs social media in its messaging through Twitter (now "X"), Facebook, and LinkedIn, in addition to the FDVA website FloridaVets.org, a FDVA mobile application, a YouTube Channel with FDVA public service announcements, and the annual benefits guide.⁶

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 1732 creates s. 295.235, F.S., to require, subject to an annual appropriation of \$500,000 by the Legislature, the FDVA to enhance and expand its Internet-based, mobile application, print, social media, and in-person outreach programs for the purpose of connecting veterans and their families or survivors with earned services, benefits, and support beyond existing efforts.

The bill requires that the FDVA must use the appropriated funds to annually host at least two public events to disseminate information on benefits and services to in-person and virtual attendees. Information disseminated must include, but is not limited to, educational, medical, insurance, and disability benefits.

The bill requires the FDVA to annually submit a report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The report must include the number of public

³ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Women Veterans*, available at <https://floridavets.org/our-veterans/women-veterans/> (last visited Jan. 17, 2024).

⁴ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Benefits & Services*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/benefits-services/> (last visited Jan. 17, 2024).

⁵ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide*, available at <https://floridavets.org/resources/va-benefits-guide/> (last visited Jan. 18, 2024).

⁶ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *2024 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis, SB 1732*, July 1, 2024 (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

events hosted by the FDVA, the number of attendees at each event, and other information the FDVA deems necessary.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Although the bill provides an expanded role for the FDVA, the role is conditioned on an annual \$500,000 appropriation by the Legislature.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 295.235, Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

By Senator Wright

8-00982-24

20241732__

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to veterans' assistance; creating s. 295.235, F.S.; requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs, subject to appropriation, to expand outreach programs connecting veterans, families, and their survivors to certain services, benefits, and support; requiring the department to host public events for such purpose; requiring the department to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature which contains specified information; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the State of Florida offers the nearly 1.5 million veterans residing in this state unique benefits, such as in-state tuition rates for veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, several layers of property tax exemptions, and expanded veterans' preference, including extensive benefits and licensure and fee waivers, for many activities and occupations, and

WHEREAS, veterans' benefits and services provided by the State of Florida are meant to complement and augment available federal programs to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary state expense for a federally funded service or benefit, and

WHEREAS, with only 749,000 Florida veterans enrolled in earned health care services from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, hundreds of thousands of the state's veterans and their families are not taking advantage of earned federal, state, and local services, benefits, and support, and

WHEREAS, while Department of Veterans' Affairs veterans'

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claims examiners assisted more than 272,000 veterans in providing information and counsel on earned services, benefits, and support by the end of fiscal year 2022, additional available federal dollars for Florida veterans remain untouched due to a lack of awareness of their availability, and

WHEREAS, a corresponding increase in the quality and quantity of outreach opportunities linking veterans to earned benefits through the Department of Veterans' Affairs will not only increase the quality of life of Florida veterans and their families, but provide additional federal dollars to bolster local economies, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Section 295.235, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

295.235 Funds for promoting veteran assistance.—

(1) Subject to the annual appropriation of \$500,000 by the Legislature, the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall enhance and expand its Internet-based, mobile application, print, social media, and in-person outreach programs through various means for the purpose of connecting veterans and their families or survivors with earned services, benefits, and support beyond existing underfunded efforts.

(2) The department shall use such funds to host at least two public events each year to disseminate information to in-person and virtual attendees regarding benefits and services available to veterans, including, but not limited to, educational, medical, insurance, and disability benefits.

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59 (3) The department shall submit an annual report to the
60 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
61 House of Representatives which includes the number of public
62 events hosted by the department under this section, the number
63 of attendees at each such event, and any other information
64 deemed necessary by the department.

65 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: SB 301

Case No.:

Type:

Caption: Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Judge:

Started: 1/29/2024 4:00:26 PM

Ends: 1/29/2024 4:22:50 PM

Length: 00:22:25

4:00:26 PM	Chair Wright calls meeting to order
4:00:30 PM	Roll call
4:00:40 PM	Quorum announced
4:00:48 PM	Pledge of Allegiance led by Senator Baxley
4:01:14 PM	Chair with opening comments
4:01:29 PM	Tab 1 SB 1262 Qualifications of the Director of the Division of Emergency Management
4:01:35 PM	Senator Collins explains the bill
4:01:43 PM	Questions
4:02:20 PM	Amendment Barcode 147140
4:02:22 PM	Senator Collins explains
4:02:44 PM	Questions
4:02:47 PM	Senator Pizzo
4:02:51 PM	Senator Collins
4:03:21 PM	Senator Collins closes
4:03:25 PM	Amendment is adopted
4:03:33 PM	Back on the bill
4:03:37 PM	Questions
4:03:39 PM	Senator Collins closes
4:03:51 PM	Roll call
4:03:55 PM	CS/SB 1262 is reported favorably
4:04:04 PM	Tab 3 SB 1666 Veterans
4:04:14 PM	Senator Collins explains the bill
4:04:23 PM	Questions
4:04:37 PM	Amendment Barcode 371270
4:04:48 PM	Senator Collins explains
4:04:57 PM	Questions
4:05:27 PM	Debate
4:05:32 PM	Senator Pizzo
4:05:36 PM	Senator Collins
4:06:16 PM	Senator Collins closes
4:06:20 PM	Amendment is adopted
4:06:24 PM	Back on the bill
4:06:27 PM	Questions
4:06:30 PM	Appearance Forms
4:06:34 PM	Bill Helmich, VFW/American Legion waives
4:06:44 PM	Eric King waives
4:06:58 PM	Senator Collins closes
4:07:52 PM	Roll call
4:07:55 PM	CS/SB 1666 is reported favorably
4:08:08 PM	Tab 4 SB 1720 Marine Encroachment on Military Operations
4:08:23 PM	Senator Rodriguez explains the bill
4:09:44 PM	Questions
4:10:06 PM	Senator Rodriguez
4:10:13 PM	Roll call
4:10:16 PM	SB 1720 is reported favorably
4:10:26 PM	Tab 2 SB 1452 Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits
4:10:46 PM	Senator Torres explains
4:11:11 PM	Amendment Barcode 863742
4:11:15 PM	Senator Torres explains
4:11:21 PM	Questions
4:11:58 PM	Debate
4:12:00 PM	Senator Baxley

4:13:03 PM	Senator Torres closes
4:13:10 PM	Amendment is adopted
4:13:41 PM	Back on the Bill
4:13:47 PM	Questions
4:13:50 PM	Appearance Form
4:13:54 PM	Karen Murillo - AARP waives
4:14:08 PM	Lexi Cook- Law Student, FSU Elder Law Clinic waives
4:14:12 PM	Bill Helmich, VFW/American Legion waives
4:14:15 PM	Eric King speaks
4:17:17 PM	Senator Torres closes
4:17:43 PM	Roll call
4:18:46 PM	CS/SB 1452 is reported favorably
4:18:58 PM	Chair to Vice-Chair Torres
4:19:08 PM	Tab 5 SB 1732
4:19:15 PM	Senator Wright explains the bill
4:19:37 PM	Questions
4:20:39 PM	Senator Pizzo
4:20:50 PM	Chair Wright
4:20:57 PM	Senator Wright closes
4:21:21 PM	Roll call
4:21:22 PM	SB 1732 is reported favorably
4:21:38 PM	Chair back to Chair Wright
4:21:50 PM	Senator Torres moves to adjourn
4:22:01 PM	Meeting adjourned