

<b>Tab 1</b>	<b>SB 788</b> by <b>Truenow</b> ; Similar to CS/H 00797 Veterans' Nursing Homes
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<b>Tab 2</b>	<b>SB 1280</b> by <b>Collins</b> ; Identical to H 01241 Veterans
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316166	A	S	MS, Collins	Before L.50:	03/24 07:30 AM
259822	A	S	MS, Collins	Delete L.370 - 396.	03/24 10:42 AM

<b>Tab 3</b>	<b>SB 1282</b> by <b>Collins</b> ; Identical to H 01291 Public Records/Veterans Florida Opportunity Program
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**The Florida Senate**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA**  
**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, SPACE, AND**  
**DOMESTIC SECURITY**  
**Senator Wright, Chair**  
**Senator Collins, Vice Chair**

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025  
**TIME:** 1:30—3:30 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 301 Senate Building

**MEMBERS:** Senator Wright, Chair; Senator Collins, Vice Chair; Senators Burgess, Jones, Sharief, and Truenow

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	<b>SB 788</b> Truenow (Similar CS/H 797)	Veterans' Nursing Homes; Defining the term "veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds"; authorizing the executive director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs to approve requests to create or modify veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds if certain conditions are met; authorizing the department to adopt rules, etc.	MS 03/25/2025 AHS FP
2	<b>SB 1280</b> Collins (Identical H 1241, Compare H 1291, Linked S 1282)	Veterans; Updating a reference to federal law relating to the designation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs as the state approving agency for veterans' education and training; renaming the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program administered by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., as the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; requiring Florida is for Veterans, Inc., and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences to enter into a grant agreement; providing an exemption from driver license fees to members of the Florida National Guard and their spouses, etc.	MS 03/25/2025 AHS AP
3	<b>SB 1282</b> Collins (Identical H 1291, Compare H 1241, Linked S 1280)	Public Records/Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; Providing an exemption from public records requirements for specified materials and information received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., while administering the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; providing for future legislative review and repeal of the exemption; providing a statement of public necessity, etc.	MS 03/25/2025 AHS AP

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.)

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

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BILL: SB 788

INTRODUCER: Senator Truenow

SUBJECT: Veterans' Nursing Homes

DATE: March 24, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Proctor	Proctor	MS	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AHS	
3.			FP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 788 provides a licensed skilled nursing facility on the campus of a retirement community qualified for nonprofit status under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which provides housing for only veterans, their spouses, and surviving spouses, may request to create or modify the designation of specific beds exclusively for veterans and their spouses if specific criteria are met.

The bill authorizes the director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) to approve requests to create or modify the designation of specific beds exclusively for veterans and their spouses under certain criteria.

The bill provides an exemption from the requirement to obtain a Certificate of Need from the Agency for Health Care Administration for:

- State veterans' nursing homes operated by or on behalf of FDVA that are constructed with state or federal funds and where the federal government pays a per diem rate not to exceed one-half of the cost of the veterans' care.
- The consolidation or combination of licensed nursing homes or the transfer of beds between licensed nursing homes that are for the sole use of veterans, their spouses, or surviving spouses, by nursing homes with any shared controlled interest and if the site of the relocation is not more than 100 miles from the original location.

The FDVA may adopt rules to administer the provisions of the bill regarding the approval of veteran- and spouse designated nursing home beds.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

## II. Present Situation:

### Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA)

The FDVA is a constitutionally chartered<sup>1</sup> department that was created to provide assistance to all former, present, and future members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their spouses and dependents in preparing claims for and securing compensation, hospitalization, career training, and other benefits or privileges to which they are, or may become entitled to under federal or state law or regulation by reason of their service.<sup>2</sup> The FDVA operates a network of nine state veterans' homes and provides statewide outreach to connect veterans with services, benefits, and support.<sup>3</sup> The FDVA offers benefits and services in the fields of health care, mental health and substance abuse, claims support, education, employment, housing, burial benefits, and legal assistance.<sup>4</sup> There are about 1.4 million veterans living in Florida, making the state's veteran population the third largest nationally.<sup>5</sup>

### *Veterans Nursing Homes*

The FDVA provides care for veterans in both domiciliary homes and nursing facilities.<sup>6</sup> Both veterans of wartime and peacetime service are eligible for admission.<sup>7</sup> Veterans are admitted to both types of facilities based on a priority ranking.<sup>8</sup> To be considered for admission to a veterans' home in Florida, a veteran must have been discharged from the military with either an honorable or an upgrade to an honorable discharge.<sup>9</sup>

Each veterans' nursing home is overseen by an administrator who is selected by the executive director (director) of the FDVA.<sup>10</sup>

To be eligible for admission, a veteran must:

- Be in need of nursing care.
- Be a resident of the state at the time of application for admission to the home.
- Not owe money to the FDVA for services rendered during any previous stay at an FDVA facility.
- Have applied for all financial assistance reasonably available through governmental sources.

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. art. IV, s. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Section 292.05(1), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Executive Director's Message*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/leadership/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Benefits & Services*, available at <https://www.floridavets.org/benefits-services/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Our Veterans*, available at <https://floridavets.org/our-veterans/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 296, F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Sections 296.08 and 296.36, F.S. "Wartime service" is defined as service in any of the following campaigns or expeditions: Spanish-American War (1898-1902); Mexican Border Period (1916-1917); World War I (1917-1918, with qualifying extensions until 1921); World War II (1941-1946); Korean War (1950-1955); Vietnam War, (1961-1975); Persian Gulf War (1990-1992); Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-date prescribed by presidential proclamation or by law); Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-date prescribed by presidential proclamation or by law). Peacetime service is defined as any Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force, or Space Force service not in any of the campaigns or expeditions. Section 1.01(14), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Sections 296.08 and 296.36, F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Sections 296.02(9) and 1.01(14), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 296.34, F.S.

- Have been approved as eligible for care and treatment by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).<sup>11</sup>

Eligible veterans are given priority for admission to a home in the following order, veterans who:

- Are residents of the state.
- Have a service-connected disability as determined by the VA, or who were discharged or released from service for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty and the disability is the condition for the nursing home need.
- Have a non-service-connected disability and are unable to defray the cost of nursing home care.<sup>12</sup>

A spouse or surviving spouse of an eligible veteran is also eligible for admission at the bottom of the priority list.<sup>13</sup> The director of the FDVA may waive the residency requirement for an otherwise qualified veteran if the veteran is a disaster evacuee of a state under a declared state of emergency.<sup>14</sup>

The FDVA currently operates eight skilled nursing facilities throughout the state. The nursing homes are located in Daytona Beach, Orlando, Land O'Lakes, Pembroke Pines, Panama City, Port Charlotte, Port St. Lucie, and St. Augustine, Florida.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Cost and Funding of Resident Care***

A resident of a state veterans' home must contribute to the cost of his or her care if the resident receives a pension, compensation, gratuity from the federal government, or income from any other source of more than \$100 per month for domiciliary homes and \$160 per month for nursing homes.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the resident's portion of payment, the VA provides a reimbursement care subsidy to domiciliary homes and nursing homes based on a per diem rate.<sup>17</sup> The current VA per diem for domiciliary homes is \$59.69 a day.<sup>18</sup> The current VA per diem for basic care in a nursing home is set at \$138.29 a day<sup>19</sup>, while per diem for disabled veterans who are determined to be at least 70 percent disabled varies by location in the state from \$504.03 a day in Daytona to \$551.04 a day in Pembroke Pines.<sup>20</sup> To qualify for reimbursement, federal law requires at least 75 percent

<sup>11</sup> Section 296.36(1), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> Section 296.36(3), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Section 296.36, F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *State Veterans' Homes*, available at <https://floridavets.org/locations/state-veterans-nursing-homes/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> Sections 296.10 and 296.37, F.S. This contribution for care may be 100 percent of the cost if an otherwise eligible veteran is able to fund his or her own support.

<sup>17</sup> 38 C.F.R. s. 51.390 and 38 C.F.R. s. 51.210.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, Geriatric and Extended Care, State Home Per Diem Program, *State Home Per Diem Basic Rates for FYs 2000-2024*, available at [https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/State\\_Veterans\\_Home\\_Program\\_per\\_diem.asp](https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/State_Veterans_Home_Program_per_diem.asp) (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> Email from Jeff Obos, Public Information Administrator, Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, to Roy Clark, Director of Cabinet and Legislative Affairs, Fla. Dep't of Veterans' Affairs (Mar. 21, 2025) (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

of the population of the facility to be veterans.<sup>21</sup> This threshold drops to 50 percent if the facility was constructed or renovated solely by the state.<sup>22</sup>

Federal law authorizes a state veterans' home to house non-veteran residents who are spouses of veterans or parents whose children died while in military service.<sup>23</sup> These residents may be required to pay for the full cost of their care since the VA does not provide a reimbursement care subsidy to domiciliary homes and nursing homes for these individuals.

### ***VA Community Nursing Home (CNH) Program***

Federal law authorizes the VA to contract with community nursing homes to provide care for eligible veterans.<sup>24</sup> Separate guidelines are outlined giving authority for the VA to place eligible veterans in non-VA facilities when necessary<sup>25</sup> and the requirements for State Veterans' Homes,<sup>26</sup> which are separate from the CNH Program but often related in the types of care that is offered.

For all types of VA skilled nursing home care, veterans must be eligible (and enrolled) in the VA health care benefit system, also called the standard medical benefits package, via the Veterans Health Administration and meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Must not have been dishonorably discharged.
- Must have served on active duty in the military, air, or naval service.
- Must have served 24-months continuously or the full active duty period in which one was called if enlisted after September 7, 1980, or became active duty after October 16, 1981. This minimum active duty criteria is not applicable for veterans who actively served before September 7, 1980, or were discharged due to a disability that resulted from, or was worsened, by active duty, or had an early-out or hardship discharge.
- National Guard or Reserves members (current and former) must have served on active duty per a federal order and served the entire period as ordered. Active duty status for training only does not count.<sup>27</sup>

CNHs must provide 24-hour skilled nursing care (such as wound care or help with IV medication), occupational and physical therapy, and access to social work services. Additionally, some CNHs provide short term rehab services, hospice and palliative care for the end of life, and specialized care for dementia.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 38 C.F.R. s. 51.210(d).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> 38 U.S.C. s. 1720.

<sup>25</sup> 38 C.F.R. s. 17.51.

<sup>26</sup> 38 C.F.R. s. 51.20. *See also* 38 C.F.R. s 51.30.

<sup>27</sup> American Council on Aging, Veterans Nursing Homes: Community Living Centers, *Community Nursing Homes & State Veterans Homes*, available at <https://www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/veterans-nursing-homes/> (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, *Community Nursing Home*, available at [https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICALS/docs/Community\\_Nursing\\_Home.pdf](https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICALS/docs/Community_Nursing_Home.pdf) (last visited Mar. 20, 2025).

## **Certificate of Need (CON)**

A CON is a written statement issued by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) evidencing community need for a new, converted, expanded, or otherwise significantly modified health care facility or hospice.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Certificate of Need Program***

Florida's CON program has existed since July 1973. From 1974 through 1986, the specifics of the program were largely dictated by the federal National Health Planning and Resources Development Act of 1974 (Act), which established minimum requirements regarding the type of services subject to CON review, review procedures, and review criteria.<sup>30</sup> Each state was required to have a CON program in compliance with the Act as a condition for obtaining federal funds for health programs. The Act was repealed in 1986, but Florida retained its CON program.

The CON program is a regulatory process that requires certain health care providers to obtain state approval before offering certain new or expanded services. The CON program currently regulates hospices, freestanding inpatient hospice facilities, skilled nursing facilities and intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled. It does not regulate outpatient services, home health services, purchases of major medical equipment, assisted living facilities, and hospitals.<sup>31</sup>

The Florida CON program has three levels of review: full, expedited, and exempt.<sup>32</sup> Expedited review is primarily targeted towards nursing home projects.

### ***Determination of Need, Application, and Review Process***

Most projects are reviewed on a competitive batching cycle review basis. At least 30 days prior to the application deadline for a batch cycle, an applicant must file a letter of intent with AHCA.<sup>33</sup> A letter of intent is not required for projects that will be given a non-competitive, expedited review.<sup>34</sup> A letter of intent must describe the proposal, specify the number of beds sought, and identify the services to be provided and the location of the project.<sup>35</sup>

Within 60 days after receipt of the completed applications for that batch, AHCA must issue a State Agency Action Report and Notice of Intent to Award a CON for a project in its entirety, to award a CON for identifiable portions of a project, or to deny a CON for a project.<sup>36</sup> AHCA must then publish the decision, within 14 days, in the Florida Administrative Weekly.<sup>37</sup> If no

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<sup>29</sup> Section 408.032(3), F.S.

<sup>30</sup> Pub. Law No. 93-641, 42 U.S.C. s. 300k et seq.

<sup>31</sup> Fla. Agency for Health Care Administration, *Certificate of Need (CON) Program Overview*, available at <https://ahca.myflorida.com/health-quality-assurance/bureau-of-health-facility-regulation/certificate-of-need-and-commercial-managed-care-unit/certificate-of-need-con-program-overview> (last visited March 20, 2025).

<sup>32</sup> Section 408.036, F.S.

<sup>33</sup> Section 408.039(2)(a), F.S.

<sup>34</sup> Fla. Agency for Health Care Administration, *supra* note 31.

<sup>35</sup> Section 408.039(2)(c), F.S.

<sup>36</sup> Section 408.039(4)(b), F.S.

<sup>37</sup> Section 408.039(4)(c), F.S.

administrative hearing is requested within 21 days of the publication, the State Agency Action Report and the Notice of Intent to Award the CON become a final order of AHCA.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Projects Subject to Expedited CON Review***

Certain projects are eligible for expedited CON review. Applicants for expedited review are not subject to the application deadlines associated with full comparative review and may submit an application at any time. Projects subject to an expedited review include:

- Transfer of a CON.
- Replacement of a nursing home, if the proposed project site is within a 30-mile radius of the replaced nursing home. If the proposed project site is outside the subdistrict where the replaced nursing home is located, the prior 6-month occupancy rate for licensed community nursing homes in the proposed subdistrict must be at least 85 percent in accordance with the agency's most recently published inventory.
- Replacement of a nursing home within the same district, if the proposed project site is outside a 30-mile radius of the replaced nursing home but within the same subdistrict or a geographically contiguous subdistrict. If the proposed project site is in the geographically contiguous subdistrict, the prior 6-month occupancy rate for licensed community nursing homes for that subdistrict must be at least 85 percent in accordance with the agency's most recently published inventory.
- Relocation of a portion of a nursing home's licensed beds to another facility or to establish a new facility within the same district or within a geographically contiguous district, if the relocation is within a 30-mile radius of the existing facility and the total number of nursing home beds in the state does not increase.
- Construction of a new community nursing home in a retirement community under certain conditions.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Exemptions on CON Review***

Upon request, certain projects may be provided with an exemption to a CON review, many involving hospitals, including:

- Converting licensed acute care hospital beds to Medicare and Medicaid certified skilled nursing beds in a rural hospital, so long as the conversion of the beds does not involve the construction of new facilities.
- Adding nursing home beds at a skilled nursing facility that is part of a retirement community offering a variety of residential settings and services.<sup>40</sup>
- Building an inmate health care facility by or for the exclusive use of the Department of Corrections.
- Adding nursing home beds in a number not exceeding 30 total beds or 25 percent of the number of beds licensed in the facility being replaced in certain circumstances.
- State veterans' nursing homes operated by or on behalf of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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<sup>38</sup> Section 408.039(4)(d), F.S

<sup>39</sup> Section 408.036(2), F.S.

<sup>40</sup> Section 408.036(3)(c). F.S. This exemption is limited to a retirement community that had been incorporated in Florida and operating for at least 65 years as of July 1, 1994.



- Combining within one nursing home facility of the beds or services authorized by two or more CON issued in the same planning subdistrict.
- Dividing into two or more nursing home facilities of beds or services authorized by one CON issued in the same planning subdistrict.
- Adding nursing home beds licensed in a number not exceeding 10 total beds or 10 percent of the number of beds licensed in the facility being expanded, whichever is greater; or, for adding nursing home beds licensed at a facility that has been designated as a Gold Seal nursing home in a number not exceeding 20 total beds or 10 percent of the number of licensed beds in the facility being expanded, whichever is greater.
- Replacing a licensed nursing home on the same site, or within 5 miles of the same site if within the same subdistrict, if the number of licensed beds does not increase, except in certain circumstances.
- Consolidating or combining of licensed nursing homes or transfer of beds between licensed nursing homes within the same planning district, by nursing homes with any shared controlled interest within that planning district, if there is no increase in the planning district total number of nursing home beds and the site of the relocation is not more than 30 miles from the original location.
- For beds in state mental health treatment facilities, state mental health forensic facilities and state developmental disabilities centers.
- Establishing a health care facility or project that meets all the following criteria:
  - The applicant was previously licensed within the past 21 days as a health care facility or provider that is subject to CON.
  - The applicant failed to submit a renewal application and the license expired on or after January 1, 2015.
  - The applicant does not have a license denial or revocation action pending with the agency at the time of the request.
  - The applicant's request is for the same service type, district, service area, and site for which the applicant was previously licensed;
  - The applicant's request, if applicable, includes the same number and type of beds as were previously licensed.
  - The applicant agrees to the same conditions that were previously imposed on the CON or on an exemption related to the applicant's previously licensed health care facility or project.
  - The applicant applies for initial licensure as required under s. 408.806, F.S., within 21 days after the agency approves the exemption request. If the applicant fails to apply in a timely manner, the exemption expires on the 22nd day following the agency's approval of the exemption.<sup>41</sup>

### ***CON Fees***

An applicant for CON review must pay a fee to the AHCA when the application is submitted. The minimum CON application filing fee is \$10,000.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the base fee, an applicant must pay a fee of 1.5 percent of each dollar of the proposed expenditure; however, the total fee may not exceed \$50,000.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Section 408.036(3), F.S.

<sup>42</sup> Section 408.038(1), F.S.

<sup>43</sup> Section 408.038(2), F.S.

A request for a CON exemption must be accompanied by a \$250 fee payable to AHCA.<sup>44</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 788 amends s. 296.33, F.S., to define “veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds” to mean beds that are designated only for residents admitted in accordance with s. 296.36, F.S., to a licensed skilled nursing facility on the campus of a retirement community qualified for nonprofit status under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which provides housing for only veterans, their spouses, and surviving spouses.

The bill creates s. 296.411, F.S., to provide that the director of the FDVA may approve requests to create or modify veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds at a facility so long as any such beds operate in the VA Community Nursing Home Program and are in accordance with the requirements of ss. 296.35, 296.36, 296.37, and 296.41, F.S. The bill authorizes the FDVA to adopt rules to administer this process.

The bill amends s. 408.036(3), F.S., to revise exemptions to the CON process for veterans nursing homes by providing that a CON is not required for:

- State veterans’ nursing homes operated by or on behalf of FDVA that are constructed with state or federal funds and for which the federal government pays a per diem rate not to exceed one-half of the cost of the veterans’ care.
- The consolidation or combination of licensed nursing homes or the transfer of beds between licensed nursing homes that are for the sole use of veterans, their spouses, or surviving spouses, by nursing homes with any shared controlled interest and if the site of the relocation is not more than 100 miles from the original location.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The mandate restrictions do not apply because the bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds, reduce counties or municipalities’ ability to raise revenue, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

#### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None identified.

#### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None identified.

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<sup>44</sup> Section 408.036(4), F.S., and Rule 59C-1.005(2)(g), F.A.C.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None identified.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

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

None identified.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

The bill may have an indeterminant positive fiscal impact on a licensed skilled nursing facility on the campus of a retirement community qualified for nonprofit status under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which provides housing for only veterans, their spouses, and surviving spouses, who requests to create or modify the designation of specific beds exclusively for veterans and their spouses under the provisions of the bill, and whose request is approved by the director of the FDVA.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None identified.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None identified.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None identified.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 296.33 and 408.036. This bill additionally creates section 296.411 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.

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

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By Senator Truenow

13-01578-25

2025788\_\_

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to veterans' nursing homes; amending s. 296.33, F.S.; defining the term "veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds"; creating s. 296.411, F.S.; authorizing the executive director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs to approve requests to create or modify veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds if certain conditions are met; authorizing the department to adopt rules; amending s. 408.036, F.S.; revising exemptions from certificate of need requirements for certain projects relating to veterans' nursing homes; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (7) is added to section 296.33, Florida Statutes, to read:

296.33 Definitions.—As used in this part, the term:

(7) "Veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds" means beds that are designated only for residents admitted in accordance with s. 296.36 to a licensed skilled nursing facility on the campus of a retirement community qualified for nonprofit status under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code which provides housing for only veterans, their spouses, and surviving spouses.

Section 2. Section 296.411, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

296.411 Approval; veteran- and spouse-designated nursing

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

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home beds.—The director may approve requests to create or modify veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds at a facility so long as any such beds operate in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Community Nursing Home Program and are in accordance with the requirements of ss. 296.35, 296.36, 296.37, and 296.41. The department may adopt rules to administer this section.

Section 3. Paragraph (f) of subsection (3) of section 408.036, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (n) is added to that subsection, to read:

408.036 Projects subject to review; exemptions.—

(3) EXEMPTIONS.—Upon request, the following projects are subject to exemption from subsection (1):

(f) For state veterans' nursing homes operated by or on behalf of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with part II of chapter 296 for which ~~at least 50 percent of~~ the construction cost is federally funded by the state or the Federal Government and for which the Federal Government pays a per diem rate not to exceed one-half of the cost of the veterans' care in such state nursing homes. These beds ~~may shall~~ not be included in the nursing home bed inventory.

(n) For the consolidation or combination of licensed nursing homes or the transfer of beds between licensed nursing homes that are for the sole use of veterans, their spouses, or surviving spouses in accordance with part II of chapter 296, by nursing homes with any shared controlled interest and if the site of the relocation is not more than 100 miles from the original location.

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Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.



## THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

### COMMITTEES:

Agriculture, *Chair*  
Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment,  
and General Government  
Appropriations Committee on Transportation,  
Tourism, and Economic Development  
Banking and Insurance  
Fiscal Policy  
Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and  
Domestic Security  
Transportation

### SENATOR KEITH TRUENOW

13th District

March 3, 2025

Senator Tom Wright  
412 Senate Office Building  
404 So Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chair Wright,

I would like to request SB 788 Veterans Nursing Homes be placed on your next available agenda in Military & Veterans Affairs Committee.

This good bill entitled an act relating to veterans' nursing homes; amending and defining the term "veteran- and spouse-designated nursing home beds"; creating s. 296.411, F.S.; authorizing the executive director of the Department of Veterans' Affairs to approve requests to create or modify veteran- and spouse designated nursing home beds if certain conditions are met; authorizing the department to adopt rules; amending s. 408.036, F.S.; revising exemptions from certificate of need requirements for certain projects relating to veterans' nursing homes.

I appreciate your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Truenow".

Senator Keith Truenow  
Senate District 13

KT/dd

cc: Tim Proctor, Staff Director  
Lois Graham, Administrative Assistant

#### REPLY TO:

- Lake County Agricultural Center, 1951 Woodlea Road, Tavares, Florida 32778 (352) 750-3133
- 16207 State Road 50, Suite 401, Clermont, Florida 34711
- 304 Senate Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5013

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**BEN ALBRITTON**  
President of the Senate

**JASON BRODEUR**  
President Pro Tempore

**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.)

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

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BILL: SB 1280

INTRODUCER: Senator Collins

SUBJECT: Veterans

DATE: March 24, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ingram	Proctor	MS	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AHS	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1280 amends multiple provisions regarding servicemembers and veterans. The bill:

- Revises the board of directors membership of Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida).
- Renames the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to the Veterans Florida Opportunity (VFO) Program.
- Revises the grant reimbursement limitations under the VFO program and deletes a provision that authorizes for reimbursement of only permanent full-time employees.
- Revises how training costs must be calculated under the VFO program.
- Authorizes grant funds to be used as educational stipends for certain persons training at any location of the University of Florida (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.
- Requires Veterans Florida and the UF to enter into an agreement for grant funds.
- Provides a one-time exemption to veterans from the Department of State fees for select incorporation and business filings.
- Exempts Florida National Guard members and their spouses from certain driver license and identification card fees.
- Provides a reduced fee for persons who are active or retired servicemembers for resident lifetime hunting licenses and resident lifetime sportsman’s licenses.
- Provides that the chief judge of a judicial circuit has the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program of that circuit, by removing state attorney’s authority.

The bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the FDVA, for Veterans Florida, for the administration and implementation of the VFO program.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact. *See* Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.



The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

## II. Present Situation:

### State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is the designated state approving agency for purposes of veteran's education and training in accordance with federal law and the annual contract between the State of Florida and the federal government.<sup>1</sup>

### Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) is a nonprofit corporation within the FDVA created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.<sup>2</sup> Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence.<sup>3</sup> Veterans Florida also assists veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and encourages the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community which lends to its mission in assisting veterans fully transition to civilian life.<sup>4</sup> Veterans Florida has many duties, including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing, awareness, and outreach activities toward its target market.<sup>5</sup>
- Promoting and enhancing the value of military skill sets to businesses.
- Implementing and administering the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) program and administering other relevant programs.
- Managing all funds received in a responsible and prudent manner and ensuring that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements.<sup>6</sup>

Veterans Florida is not a unit or entity of state government; however, it is a separate budget entity and not subject to the control, supervision, or direction of the FDVA.<sup>7</sup> In Fiscal Year 2024-2025, the Legislature appropriated \$2.4 million in nonrecurring funds for veterans employment and training services.<sup>8</sup>

### Board of Directors

Veterans Florida is governed by an 11-member board of directors.<sup>9</sup> In consideration of military experience and business expertise among the appointments, the Governor appoints three members to the board and the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of

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<sup>1</sup> Ch. 88-29, s. 24, Laws of Fla. See s. 295.124, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 2014-1, s. 12, Laws of Fla. See s. 295.21(1) and (2), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Florida is for Veterans, Inc., Brands as Veterans Florida*, available at <https://floridavets.org/florida-is-for-veterans-inc-brands-as-veterans-florida/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Section 295.21(2), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 295.21(3)(a), F.S. defines "target market" to mean servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried.

<sup>6</sup> Section 295.21(3), F.S. identifies all of the duties required of Veterans Florida.

<sup>7</sup> Section 295.21(1), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. 2024-231, Laws of Fla., Specific Appropriations 605 and 606, Section 3, Human Services, General Appropriations Act.

<sup>9</sup> Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

Representatives each appoint three members to the board who may not be from the body over which he or she presides.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint one member from the body over which he or she presides to serve on the board as ex officio, nonvoting members.<sup>11</sup> Members of the board of directors serve for staggered terms of 4 years.<sup>12</sup> Board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred while serving.<sup>13</sup>

### **Veterans Employment and Training Services Program**

Created within the FDVA, the VETS program assists in connecting servicemembers, 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.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of the VETS program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields and to inspire the growth of veteran owned small businesses.<sup>15</sup> In accordance with its duties under s. 252.21(3), F.S., Veterans Florida administers the VETS program and performs many functions including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts.
- Assisting individuals in the target market<sup>16</sup> who reside in or relocate to Florida and who seek employment with the target industry or secondary target industry business.
- Offering skills assessments and assisting in establishing employment goals.
- Assisting Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target market. Veterans Florida provides services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable 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.
- Providing information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist individuals in the target market 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.
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target market in Florida which connects business leaders in the state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.
- Administering a SkillBridge<sup>17</sup> initiative for target industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Section 295.21(4)(c), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 295.21(4)(e), F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Section 295.22(3), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> See U.S. Dep't of Defense, DOD SkillBridge, Program Overview-What is SkillBridge, available at <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/program-overview.htm> (March 23, 2025).

<sup>18</sup> Section 295.22(4), F.S.

Under the VETS program, Veterans Florida may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.<sup>19</sup> Veterans Florida may collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives.<sup>20</sup> One of the entities that Veterans Florida collaborates with under s. 295.22(5), F.S., is the Department of Commerce and efforts of the now defunct Florida Defense Support Task Force which was replaced by a Department of Commerce direct-support organization in 2024.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Grant Program***

Within a grant program created by Veterans Florida, grant funds may be used only in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs and may fund specialized training specific to a particular business.<sup>22</sup>

- Grants may be allocated only upon a review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of accreditation and licensure and as such, grant funds may be prioritized to be used for:
  - A certificate, a license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List;<sup>23</sup>
  - Any federally created certifications or licenses; and
  - Any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by Veterans Florida.<sup>24</sup>
- Costs and expenditures are limited to \$8,000 per trainee. Qualified businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before receiving reimbursement from Veterans Florida 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:
  - Tuition and fees.
  - Books and classroom materials.
  - Rental fees for facilities.<sup>25</sup>
- Before funds are allocated for a request, Veterans Florida must prepare a grant agreement which must include certain identifications and permissions.<sup>26</sup>
- A business may receive a grant fund under any state program and a grant within the VETS program for the same veteran trainee.<sup>27</sup>

### **University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)**

The UF/IFAS is a federal-state-county partnership devoted to developing familiarity with agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences.

UF/IFAS satisfies the University of Florida's (UF) land grant mission by working to enhance and sustain the quality of human life through its research facilities, extension services offered in

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<sup>19</sup> Section 295.22(5), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Ch. 2024-234, Laws of Fla.

<sup>22</sup> Section 295.22(4)(d), F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 445.004(4)(h), F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 295.22(4)(d)1., F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 295.22(4)(d)2., F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 295.22(4)(d)3., F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 295.22(4)(d)4., F.S.

every county throughout the state, and education at the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.<sup>28</sup>

The Morrill Act of 1862 established the Land Grant university system. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law what is generally referred to as the Land Grant Act. Sponsored by U.S. Representative Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, the legislation granted to each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative under apportionment based on the 1860 census. Proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in a perpetual endowment fund which would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states.<sup>29</sup>

The Florida Agricultural College established at Lake City in 1884 under the Morrill Act eventually became the UF's College of Agriculture in 1906. At that time, the East Florida Seminary joined the college and was moved to Gainesville. The renamed University of Florida was the land grant college in Florida, and the Agricultural Experiment Station became a unit of the College of Agriculture at UF. In present day, research and education programs are operated by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station at 22 locations throughout Florida.<sup>30</sup>

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service specifying that the service would be associated with a land grant college. The Smith-Lever Act also required that federal funds be matched with local funds. Florida Cooperative Extension is a partnership between UF/IFAS, United States Department of Agriculture, and county governments in Florida to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to the public through nonresident educational programs. Operating as part of UF/IFAS, Florida Cooperative Extension serves the state's 67 counties by providing information and conducting educational programs on issues relating to agriculture, world markets, conservation, food safety, child and family development, consumer credit, and youth development.<sup>31</sup>

### **Department of State**

The Department of State (DOS), created in s. 20.10, F.S., is composed of six divisions: Elections, Historical Resources, Corporations, Library and Information Services, Arts and Culture, and Administration. The head of the DOS is the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Secretary performs functions conferred by the State Constitution upon the custodian of state records.<sup>32</sup>

One of the DOS's responsibilities includes receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required in law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,<sup>33</sup> articles of

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<sup>28</sup> UF/IFAS University of Florida, *About UF/IFAS*, available at <https://ifas.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>29</sup> UF/IFAS University of Florida, *Land Grant & Sea Grant: Acts, History & Institutions*, available at <https://ifas.ufl.edu/land-grant-sea-grant-acts-history/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> Section 20.10(1), F.S.

<sup>33</sup> *See, e.g.*, ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.

incorporation,<sup>34</sup> and registration of fictitious names.<sup>35</sup> 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;<sup>36</sup>
- 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;<sup>37</sup>
- 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;<sup>38</sup> 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 partner<sup>39</sup> as well as an annual report, among other documents.<sup>40</sup> General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>41</sup>

Filing fees vary. The following is a sampling of those fees:

<b>Department of State Filing Fees</b>		
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

### Florida National Guard

The National Guard is unique among militia in that it serves the country in both the local community and overseas. The dual mission of a National Guard member means that each member serves through both the National Guard of the state and through the U.S. Army or the U.S. Air Force.<sup>42</sup> A member of the Florida National Guard (FNG) serves either in the state Army

<sup>34</sup> Section 607.0203, F.S.

<sup>35</sup> Section 865.09, F.S.

<sup>36</sup> Sections 605.0112(5), 605.0113(4), and 605.0113(5), F.S. *See* s. 605.0206, F.S.

<sup>37</sup> Sections 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. *See* s. 607.0120(9), F.S.

<sup>38</sup> Sections 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

<sup>39</sup> Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

<sup>40</sup> Section 620.1210, F.S.

<sup>41</sup> Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

National Guard or in the state Air National Guard, considered a reserve component of each of those armed forces.<sup>43</sup> Overseeing the FNG as a federally-recognized officer, the adjutant general is appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation.<sup>44</sup>

The Department of Military Affairs provides management oversight and administrative support to the FNG.<sup>45</sup>

## **Driver Licenses**

A driver license in this state is a certificate that, subject to all other requirements of law, authorizes an individual to drive a motor vehicle and denotes a motor vehicle operator's license as defined in 49 U.S.C. s. 30301.<sup>46</sup> Florida driver licenses may include endorsements which permits the driver to drive certain types of vehicles or to transport certain types of property or a certain number of passengers.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Non-Commercial Driver Licenses***

A person with a Class E driver license may drive any noncommercial motor vehicle with Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) less than 26,001 pounds, which includes a passenger car, 15 passenger van including the driver, trucks or recreational vehicles and two or three wheel motor vehicles 50 cc or less, such as mopeds or small scooters.<sup>48</sup> A Class E learner's license permits a person to drive a motor vehicle less than 8,000 pounds. A learner's license has the following conditions, the person:

- Must have a licensed driver at least 21 years old occupying the closest seat to the right of the driver;
- Can only drive during daylight hours during the first three months from the original issue date and until 10:00 p.m., thereafter; and
- Is not allowed to operate motorcycles.<sup>49,50</sup>

For a person authorized to operate a motorcycle, a “motorcycle also” endorsement will be indicated by an “A” in the endorsement field located on the front of the card and “A-MTRCL Also” on the back of the card in the endorsement field.<sup>51</sup> A “motorcycle only” endorsement will be indicated by an “O” in the endorsement field located on the front of the card and an “O-MTRCL Only” on the back of the card in the endorsement field.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Section 250.01(3), (6), and (13), F.S.

<sup>44</sup> Section 250.10(1), F.S.

<sup>45</sup> Dep't of Military Affairs, *Home Page*, available at <https://dma.myflorida.com/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

<sup>46</sup> Section 322.01(18), F.S.

<sup>47</sup> Section 322.01(19), F.S.

<sup>48</sup> Dep't of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), *Driver Licenses & ID Cards*, available at <https://www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/general-information/license-classes-endorsements-designations/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> Section 322.01(28), F.S., defines “motorcycle” to mean any means any self-propelled vehicle, including a motor vehicle combination, not operated upon rails or guideway, excluding vehicles moved solely by human power, motorized wheelchairs, and electric bicycles, as defined in s. 316.003, F.S.

<sup>51</sup> DHSMV *supra* note 48.

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

**Commercial Driver Licenses**

A commercial driver license means a Class A, Class B, or Class C driver license issued in accordance with the requirements of ch. 322, F.S. According to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), the following are commercial driver license endorsements with their descriptions:

- Class A: Trucks or truck combinations weighing with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating of 26,001 lbs. or more, provided towed vehicle is more than 10,000 lbs.
- Class B: Straight trucks weighing 26,001 lbs. Gross Vehicle Weight Rating or more.
- Class C: Vehicles transporting hazardous materials<sup>53</sup> which are required to be placarded, or vehicles designed to transport more than 15 persons including the driver with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating of less than 26,001 lbs.<sup>54</sup>

**Identification Cards**

Any person who is 5 years of age or older, or any person who has a disability, regardless of age, who applies for a disabled parking permit under s. 320.0848, F.S., may be issued an identification card by the DHSMV upon completion of an application and payment of an application fee.<sup>55</sup>

Driver license and identification card fees vary. The following is a sampling of those fees:

<b>Driver License and Identification Card Fees</b>		
Original or Renewal Commercial Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 75.00
Conditional Commercial Driver License <sup>56</sup>	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Commercial Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Driver License Restricted to Motorcycle Use	s. 322.21(1)(d), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Replacement Driver License (if lost or destroyed)	s. 322.21(1)(e), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Original, Renewal, or Replacement Identification Card	s. 322.21(1)(f), F.S.	\$ 25.00

**Fee Exemptions**

Any member of the Armed Forces or his or her spouse, daughter, son, stepdaughter, or stepson, who holds a Florida driver license and who presents an affidavit showing that he or she was out of the state due to service in the Armed Forces of the United States (U.S.A.F.) at the time of license expiration is exempt from paying the delinquent fee if the application for renewal is made within 15 months after the expiration of his or her license and within 90 days after the date of

<sup>53</sup> Section 322.01(25), F.S. See 49 U.S.C. s. 5103, subpart F of 49 C.F.R. part 172, and 42 C.F.R. part 73.

<sup>54</sup> DHSMV *supra* note 48.

<sup>55</sup> Section 322.051(1), F.S.

<sup>56</sup> Section 322.21, F.S.(1)(a), F.S., provides that if an applicant has completed training and is applying for employment or is currently employed in a public or nonpublic school system that requires the commercial license, the fee is the same as for a Class E driver license.

discharge or transfer to a military or naval establishment in this state as shown in the affidavit. However, such a person is not exempt from any reexamination requirement.<sup>57</sup>

Any veteran honorably discharged from the Armed Forces who has been issued a valid identification card by the FDVA in accordance with s. 295.17, F.S., has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100-percent total and permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation, or has been determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent, is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the U.S.A.F., and who is qualified to obtain a driver license under ch. 322, F.S., is exempt from all fees required by s. 322.21, F.S.<sup>58</sup>

An applicant for an identification card who meets any of the following criteria is exempt from the fee for an original, renewal, or replacement identification card:

- The applicant presents a valid Florida voter's registration card to the DHSMV and attests that he or she is experiencing a financial hardship.
- The applicant presents evidence satisfactory to the DHSMV that he or she is homeless as defined in s. 414.0252(7), F.S.
- The applicant presents evidence satisfactory to the DHSMV that his or her annual income is at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The applicant is a juvenile offender who is in the custody or under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice, who is receiving services pursuant to s. 985.461, F.S., and whose identification card is issued by the DHSMV's mobile issuing units.<sup>59</sup>

An applicant for an identification card who is 80 years of age or older and whose driving privilege is denied due to failure to pass a vision test administered in accordance with s. 322.18(5), F.S., is exempt from the fee for an original identification card.<sup>60</sup>

### **Recreational Licenses**

General law and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) rules prohibit the taking of game, freshwater or saltwater fish, or fur-bearing animals within this state without having first obtained a license, permit, or authorization number and paid the associated fees.<sup>61</sup> Resident and nonresident hunting and fishing licenses and permits and their associated fees are set out in statute.<sup>62</sup>

#### ***Hunting and Fishing Annual Licenses***

Under current law, a member of the U.S.A.F. stationed in the state and his or her family member who resides with the U.S.A.F. member is considered a resident of this state for purposes of applying for a hunting, fishing, or other recreational licenses.<sup>63</sup> A state resident pays reduced fees on licenses, such as paying \$15.50 for an annual freshwater or saltwater fishing license, rather

<sup>57</sup> Section 322.21(6), F.S.

<sup>58</sup> Section 322.21(7), F.S.

<sup>59</sup> Section 322.21(1)(f), F.S.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> Section 379.354(1), F.S.

<sup>62</sup> Section 379.354, F.S.

<sup>63</sup> Section 379.101(30)(b)1., F.S.



than \$45.50; \$15.50 for an annual hunting license to take game, rather than \$150; and \$46.50 for the option of an annual combined hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license (no such option is available for a combination license for a nonresident).<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, disabled veterans; active duty or reserve duty servicemembers of the U.S.A.F., the U.S. Coast Guard, military reserves, the FNG, or the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve; the immediate family, such as a parent, spouse, or child, of such disabled veterans and servicemembers; and one additional person designated to assist a disabled veteran, are exempt from having to possess a hunting, freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit during outdoor recreational events permitted by the FWC whose primary purpose is the rehabilitation or enjoyment of disabled veterans.<sup>65</sup>

### ***Gold Sportsman's License***

An annual military gold sportsman's license is available to a state resident who is an active or retired member of the U.S.A.F., U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, or the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve.<sup>66</sup> The fee for the annual military gold sportsman's license is \$18.50, rather than the \$98.50 charged for the annual gold sportsman's license, which authorizes the same activities.<sup>67</sup> Activities authorized under both licenses include the taking of freshwater fish, saltwater fish, and game, subject to state and federal law, rules, and regulations.<sup>68</sup> Other eligible activities include those authorized by a management area permit, a muzzle-loading gun season permit, a crossbow season permit, a turkey permit, a Florida waterfowl permit, a deer permit, an archery season permit, a snook permit, and a spiny lobster permit.<sup>69</sup>

### ***Resident Lifetime Hunting License***

A lifetime hunting license is available to a state resident only, for a person who is:

- Four years of age or younger, for a fee of \$200.
- Five years of age or older, but under 13 years of age, for a fee of \$350.
- Thirteen years of age or older, for a fee of \$500.<sup>70</sup>

Activities authorized under a lifetime hunting license include taking, or attempting to take or possess, game consistent with the state and federal laws and regulations and rules of the commission in effect at the time of the taking.<sup>71</sup> Other eligible activities include all activities authorized by a muzzle-loading gun season permit, a crossbow season permit, a turkey permit, an archery season permit, a Florida waterfowl permit, a deer permit, and a management area permit, excluding fishing.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Compare s. 379.354(4) with s. 379.354(5), F.S.

<sup>65</sup> Section 379.353(2)(q), F.S.

<sup>66</sup> Section 379.354(4)(j), F.S.

<sup>67</sup> Section 379.354(4)(i) and (j), F.S.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> Section 379.354(11)(a), F.S.

<sup>71</sup> Section 379.354(11)(b), F.S.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

### ***Resident Lifetime Sportsman's License***

A lifetime sportsman's license is available to a state resident only, for a person who is:

- Four years of age or younger, for a fee of \$400.
- Five years of age or older, but under 13 years of age, for a fee of \$700.
- Thirteen years of age or older, for a fee of \$1,000.<sup>73</sup>

Activities authorized under a lifetime sportsman's license include taking, or attempting to take or possess, freshwater and saltwater fish, and game, consistent with the state and federal laws and regulations and rules of the commission in effect at the time of taking.<sup>74</sup> Other eligible activities include all activities authorized by a management area permit, a muzzle-loading gun season permit, a crossbow season permit, a turkey permit, an archery season permit, a Florida waterfowl permit, a deer permit, a snook permit, and a spiny lobster permit.<sup>75</sup>

### **Veterans Treatment Court Program**

Veteran treatment courts are problem-solving courts addressing the root causes of criminal behavior.<sup>76</sup> Modeled after drug court treatment programs, veteran treatment courts divert eligible veterans and servicemembers into treatment programs for military-related conditions or war-related trauma, including:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Mental illness;
- Traumatic brain injury; and
- Substance abuse.<sup>77</sup>

In 2012, the Legislature authorized each judicial circuit to establish the Military Veterans and Servicemembers Court Program, to serve veterans<sup>78</sup> and servicemembers<sup>79</sup> who are convicted of a criminal offense and who suffer from a military-related mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse disorder, or psychological problem.<sup>80</sup> Under the court program such defendants could be sentenced in accordance with general law,<sup>81</sup> in a manner that appropriately addressed the severity of the illnesses or conditions through services tailored to the individual needs of a participant.<sup>82</sup>

In 2021, the Legislature revised and redesignated the existing military veterans and servicemembers court program, as the veterans treatment court program to create a statewide standard for the creation, operation and effort to detect, discern, and assist veterans in correcting

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<sup>73</sup> Section 379.354(12)(a), F.S.

<sup>74</sup> Section 379.354(12)(b), F.S.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.*

<sup>76</sup> Florida State Courts, *Problem-Solving Courts*, available at <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/court-improvement/problem-solving-courts/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

<sup>77</sup> Florida State Courts, *Problem-Solving Courts - Veterans Courts*, available at <https://www.flcourts.gov/Resources-Services/Office-of-Problem-Solving-Courts/Veterans-Courts> (last visited Mar20 2025).

<sup>78</sup> Section 1.01, F.S. (2012).

<sup>79</sup> Section 250.01, F.S. (2012).

<sup>80</sup> Ch. 2012-159, Laws of Fla.

<sup>81</sup> Ch. 921, F.S. (2012).

<sup>82</sup> Ch. 2012-159, Laws of Fla.

the behaviors and choices that lead to the veterans' court involvement.<sup>83</sup> The purpose of a veterans treatment court program is to address the underlying causes of a veteran's involvement with the judicial system through the use of specialized dockets, multidisciplinary teams, and evidence-based treatment.<sup>84</sup> A veterans treatment court program must use nonadversarial approaches to resolve such underlying causes.<sup>85</sup>

A court with jurisdiction over criminal cases is authorized to create and administer a veterans treatment court and a chief judge may issue administrative orders regarding such court.<sup>86</sup> A veterans treatment court program may adjudicate misdemeanors and felonies.<sup>87</sup> In addition, under current law:

- The chief judge may issue administrative orders concerning the program.
- The chief judge and state attorney of the judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program have the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program within the circuit.<sup>88</sup>

Current law requires a veterans treatment program to adopt policies and procedures to implement key components of a veterans treatment program,<sup>89</sup> and in addition, the veterans treatment program is authorized to adopt supplemental policies and procedures.<sup>90</sup> Each veterans treatment court program must seek input from the state attorney and other interested persons in developing and adopting such policies and procedures.<sup>91</sup> The veterans treatment court program must also create a record of the adopted policies and procedures.<sup>92</sup>

### ***Eligibility and Admission***

In accordance with s. 394.47891, F.S., a defendant means a veteran<sup>93</sup> or servicemember<sup>94</sup> who has been charged with or convicted of a crime.<sup>95</sup>

A defendant may participate in a veterans treatment court program if he or she is approved by the state attorney, in consultation with the court, and meets the following criteria:

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<sup>83</sup> Section 394.47891(1), F.S.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> *Id.*

<sup>86</sup> Section 394.47891(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>87</sup> Section 394.47891(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>88</sup> Section 394.47891(3)(c) and (d), F.S.

<sup>89</sup> Section 394.47891(6)(a), F.S.

<sup>90</sup> Section 394.47891(7), F.S.

<sup>91</sup> Section 394.47891(5)(a), F.S.

<sup>92</sup> Section 394.47891(5)(b), F.S.

<sup>93</sup> Section 394.47891(3)(d), F.S., for purposes of the veterans treatment court programs, "veteran" is defined as a person who has served in the military.

<sup>94</sup> Section 394.47891(2)(c), F.S., for purposes of the veterans treatment court programs, servicemember is defined as a member of the active or reserve components of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, or Coast Guard; a member of the Florida National Guard; a current or former contractor for the United States Department of Defense; or a current or former military member of a foreign allied country.

<sup>95</sup> Section 394.47891(2)(a), F.S.

- The defendant has a service-related mental health condition, service-related traumatic brain injury, service-related substance use disorder, or service-related psychological problem or has experienced military sexual trauma.
- The defendant's participation in the veterans treatment court program is in the interest of justice and of benefit to the defendant and the community.<sup>96</sup>

In making a determination of the foregoing, the state attorney, in consultation with the court, must consider:

- The nature and circumstances of the offense charged.
- The special characteristics or circumstances of the defendant and any victim or alleged victim, including any recommendation of the victim or alleged victim.
- The defendant's criminal history and whether the defendant previously participated in a veterans treatment court program or similar program.
- Whether the defendant's needs exceed the treatment resources available to the veterans treatment court program.
- The impact on the community of the defendant's participation and treatment in the veterans treatment court program.
- Recommendations of any law enforcement agency involved in investigating or arresting the defendant.
- If the defendant owes restitution, the likelihood of payment during the defendant's participation in the veterans treatment court program.
- Any mitigating circumstances.
- Any other circumstances reasonably related to the defendant's case.<sup>97</sup>

A defendant who meets those eligibility requirements may be admitted to a veterans treatment court program at any stage of a criminal proceeding and must submit an application to the state attorney if he or she is seeking to participate in the program.<sup>98</sup> The state attorney must review each application and determine whether the defendant meets the eligibility requirements under the provisions of s. 394.47891(8), F.S.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

#### **State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training**

The bill amends s. 295.124, F.S., to update the federal law reference for the designation of the state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and training. The updated reference is 38 U.S.C. s. 3671.<sup>99</sup>

#### **Florida is for Veterans, Inc.**

The bill amends s. 295.21, F.S., renaming the VETS program as the Veterans Florida Opportunity (VFO) Program to conform with the bill provisions in s. 295.22, F.S. Additionally,

<sup>96</sup> Section 394.47891(8)(a), F.S.

<sup>97</sup> Section 394.47891(8)(b), F.S.

<sup>98</sup> Section 394.47891(4), F.S.

<sup>99</sup> 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 (2021). See United States Code available at <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title38-section1771&num=0&edition=prelim> (last visited March 20, 2025).

the bill clarifies that the three members appointed by the Governor, three members appointed by the President of the Senate, and three members appointed by Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives are all voting members of the Veterans Florida board of directors (board). The bill also revises the membership of the board to include an additional member who is appointed by the Governor who is a secretary, or his or her designee, with experience in economic or workforce development from an executive agency. Such member will be an ex officio, nonvoting member.

### **Veterans Employment and Training Services**

The bill amends s. 295.22, F.S., renaming the VETS program as the VFO Program.

#### ***Grant Program***

The bill also:

- Revises the limits of grant reimbursements to \$5,000 per eligible trainee per fiscal year, rather than the \$8,000 cost and expenditure total limitation per trainee.
- Removes the reimbursement limit of 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran for a qualified business.
- Removes the requirement that the veteran be a permanent, full-time employee of a qualified business in order to receive a training reimbursement.
- Requires that training costs for a trainee in a fiscal year be equal to or greater than \$5,000.
- Clarifies that the duration, not estimated duration, of the instructional program be identified as part of the grant agreement between Veterans Florida and the business requesting funds.

The bill authorizes grant funds to be used as educational stipends for individuals in the target market<sup>100</sup> while training at any location of the UF/IFAS within this state. Veterans Florida and the UF are required to enter into an agreement before any grant funds are expended, and Veterans Florida is required to determine the amount and structure of any educational stipend. Such stipend may be used only for such training for a period of at least 4 months and no more than 6 months, in the absence of veteran-specific federally funded programs.

For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the FDVA for purposes of funding Veterans Florida administration and implementation of programs.<sup>101</sup>

### **Fee Exemptions and Discounts**

#### ***Department of State Filing Fees***

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

- Articles of organization;
- Articles of incorporation;

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<sup>100</sup> Section 295.21(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>101</sup> Sections 295.21(3)(d), 295.21(3)(f), and 295.22, F.S., describe those programs Veterans Florida administers and implements including, Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and other relevant programs.

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

Fees charged for filings, exempted in the bill, are as follows:

<b>Department of State Filing Fees</b>		
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

The bill provides that a veteran may apply for this exemption only once.

***Driver License and Identification Card***

The bill amends s. 322.21, F.S., to exempt a member of the FNG who has been issued a valid identification card by the Department of Military Affairs and his or her spouse from the following fees:

<b>Driver License and Identification Card Fees</b>		
Original or Renewal Commercial Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 75.00
Conditional Commercial Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Commercial Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Driver License Restricted to Motorcycle Use	s. 322.21(1)(d), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Replacement Driver License (if lost or destroyed)	s. 322.21(1)(e), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Original, Renewal, or Replacement Identification Card	s. 322.21(1)(f), F.S.	\$ 25.00

***Resident Lifetime Hunting Licenses***

The bill amends s. 379.354, F.S., providing that persons who are active or retired members of the of the U.S.A.F., the U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve may purchase a resident lifetime hunting license for a fee of \$250, rather than \$500, which is the fee for state residents who are persons 13 years of age or older.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> 379.354(11)(a), F.S.

Activities authorized under a lifetime hunting license include taking, or attempting to take or possess, game consistent with the state and federal laws and regulations and rules of the commission in effect at the time of the taking. Other eligible activities include all activities authorized by a muzzle-loading gun season permit, a crossbow season permit, a turkey permit, an archery season permit, a Florida waterfowl permit, a deer permit, and a management area permit, excluding fishing.<sup>103</sup>

### ***Resident Lifetime Sportsman's License***

The bill amends s. 379.354, F.S., providing that persons who are active or retired members of the of the U.S.A.F., the U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve may purchase a resident lifetime sportsman's license for a fee of \$400, rather than \$1000, which is the fee for state residents who are persons 13 years of age or older.<sup>104</sup>

Activities authorized by the purchase of lifetime sportsman's license, include taking, or attempting to take or possess, freshwater and saltwater fish, and game, consistent with the state and federal laws and regulations and rules of the commission in effect at the time of taking. Other eligible activities include all activities authorized by a management area permit, a muzzle-loading gun season permit, a crossbow season permit, a turkey permit, an archery season permit, a Florida waterfowl permit, a deer permit, a snook permit, and a spiny lobster permit.<sup>105</sup>

### **Veterans Treatment Court Programs**

The bill amends s. 394.47891, F.S., deleting the provision that the state attorney of a judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program is part of an exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veteran treatment court program of the circuit. The state attorney may still consult with the court on a defendant's eligibility and his or her admission to the veteran treatment court program.<sup>106</sup> As a result of the deletion, the bill provides that the chief judge of the judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program has the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program of the circuit.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

## **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

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<sup>103</sup> 379.354(11)(b), F.S.

<sup>104</sup> 379.354(12)(a), F.S.

<sup>105</sup> 379.354(12)(b), F.S.

<sup>106</sup> Section 394.47891(4) and (8), F.S.

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:

The bill does not create new fees, however it exempts certain servicemembers and veterans from certain state filing fees and driver license and identification card fees. In addition, the bill also reduces the fees for resident lifetime hunting and sportsman's licenses members of the U.S.A.F., U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill authorizes the use of grant funds as educational stipends for trainees with the UF/IFAS as part of an agreement required by the bill between Veterans Florida and UF. The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on those trainees who qualify for, and receive, an educational stipend, in addition to any training received through the Veterans Florida programs.

The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on veterans who are state residents. Such individuals may be eligible for a one-time exemption from the DOS filing fees for articles of organization, articles of incorporation, certificate of limited partnership, partnership registration statement, or designation as a registered agent.

The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on FNG members and their spouses who qualify under one of the new exemptions. Such individuals may request the DHSMV to issue, replace, or renew certain driver licenses and identification cards at no charge. In addition, such individuals may also request a delinquent fee exemption.

The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on active or retired members of the of the U.S.A.F., the U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve who may receive discounts on resident lifetime hunting and resident lifetime sportsman's licenses.



**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill authorizes the use of grant funds as educational stipends for trainees with the UF/IFAS as part of an agreement required by the bill between Veterans Florida and UF. Further, the bill revises the limits of grant reimbursements to \$5,000 per eligible trainee per fiscal year, rather than the \$8,000 cost and expenditure total limitation per trainee. The foregoing program modifications to the use of grant funds may result in an increase in training costs for an eligible trainee and have the effect of reducing the number of applicants that may be trained with the same level of funding.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state for the one-time exemption from the DOS filing fees for articles of organization, articles of incorporation, certificate of limited partnership, partnership registration statement, or designation as a registered agent, for veterans who reside in this state.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state for the exemptions from driver license and identification card fees for FNG members and their spouses.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state for the reduced fees established for persons who are active or retired members of the of the U.S.A.F., the U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve for the resident lifetime hunting license and resident lifetime sportsman's license. The number of active or retired servicemembers who may have purchased a resident lifetime hunting license or resident lifetime sportsman's license in the past and the number of active or retired servicemembers who may purchase such licenses in the future is indeterminate. The fee for the resident lifetime hunting license for persons 13 years of age or older is \$500, and the fee established by the bill for active or retired servicemembers is \$250, a difference of \$250. The fee for the resident lifetime sportsman's license for persons 13 years of age or older is \$1000, and the fee established by the bill for active or retired servicemembers is \$400, a difference of \$600.

The bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the FDVA, for Veterans Florida for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for the administration and implementation of programs. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Legislature appropriated \$2.4 million in nonrecurring funds to the FDVA for Veterans Florida for the administration and implementation of programs.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The title on line 2 of the bill solely reflects veterans and does not include other servicemembers. The bill amends provisions relating to both veterans and active members of the U.S.A.F., the U.S.A.F. Reserve, the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, and the United States Coast Guard Reserve.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 295.124, 295.21, 295.22, 322.21, 379.354, and 394.47891.

This bill creates section 295.25 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.

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

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316166

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Before line 50

insert:

Section 1. Section 15.0465, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

15.0465 Official state flagship.—The S.S. American Victory, a 455-foot historic steamship built in 1944 ~~schooner Western Union, a 130-foot historic sailing vessel of the tall ship class, built in Key West and first launched in 1939, is~~



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11 designated the official state flagship.

12 Section 2. Subsections (1) and (3), paragraph (a) of  
13 subsection (4), and subsection (6) of section 320.084, Florida  
14 Statutes, are amended to read:

15 320.084 Free motor vehicle license plate to certain  
16 disabled veterans.—

17 (1) One free disabled veteran ~~“DV”~~ motor vehicle license  
18 number plate must ~~shall~~ be issued by the department for use on  
19 any motor vehicle owned or leased by any disabled veteran who  
20 has been a resident of this state continuously for the preceding  
21 5 years or has established a domicile in this state as provided  
22 by s. 222.17(1), (2), or (3), and who has been honorably  
23 discharged from the United States Armed Forces, upon  
24 application, accompanied by proof that:

25 (a) A vehicle was initially acquired through financial  
26 assistance by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
27 or its predecessor specifically for the purchase of an  
28 automobile;

29 (b) The applicant has been determined by the United States  
30 Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a  
31 service-connected 100-percent disability rating for  
32 compensation; or

33 (c) The applicant has been determined to have a service-  
34 connected disability rating of 100 percent and is in receipt of  
35 disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States  
36 Armed Services.

37 (3) The department shall, as it deems necessary, require  
38 each person to whom a motor vehicle license plate has been  
39 issued pursuant to subsection (1) to apply to the department for



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40 reissuance of his or her registration license plate. Upon  
41 receipt of the application and proof of the applicant's  
42 continued eligibility, the department shall issue a new  
43 permanent disabled veteran ~~"DV"~~ numerical motor vehicle license  
44 plate which must ~~shall~~ be of the colors red, white, and blue  
45 similar to the colors of the United States flag. The operation  
46 of a motor vehicle displaying a disabled veteran ~~"DV"~~ license  
47 plate from a previous issue period or a noncurrent validation  
48 sticker after the date specified by the department shall subject  
49 the owner if he or she is present, otherwise the operator, to  
50 the penalty provided in s. 318.18(2). Such permanent license  
51 plate must ~~shall~~ be removed upon sale of the vehicle, but may be  
52 transferred to another vehicle owned by such veteran in the  
53 manner prescribed by law. ~~The license number of each plate~~  
54 ~~issued under this section shall be identified by the letter~~  
55 ~~designation "DV."~~ Upon request of any such veteran, the  
56 department is authorized to issue a designation plate containing  
57 only the letters "DV," to be displayed on the front of the  
58 vehicle.

59 (4) (a) With the issuance of each new permanent disabled  
60 veteran ~~"DV"~~ numerical motor vehicle license plate, the  
61 department shall initially issue, without cost to the applicant,  
62 a validation sticker reflecting the owner's birth month and a  
63 serially numbered validation sticker reflecting the year of  
64 expiration. The initial sticker reflecting the year of  
65 expiration may not exceed 27 months.

66 (6) (a) A disabled veteran who meets the requirements of  
67 subsection (1) may be issued, in lieu of the disabled veteran  
68 ~~"DV"~~ license plate, a military license plate for which he or she



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69 is eligible or a specialty license plate embossed with the  
70 initials "DV" in the top left-hand corner. A disabled veteran  
71 electing a military license plate or specialty license plate  
72 under this subsection must pay all applicable fees related to  
73 such license plate, except for fees otherwise waived under  
74 subsections (1) and (4).

75 (b) A military license plate or specialty license plate  
76 elected under this subsection:

77 1. Does not provide the protections or rights afforded by  
78 ss. ~~316.1955, 316.1964, 320.0848~~, 526.141, and 553.5041.

79 2. Is not eligible for the international symbol of  
80 accessibility as described in s. 320.0842.

81

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

83 And the title is amended as follows:

84 Delete line 2

85 and insert:

86 An act relating to military affairs; amending s.  
87 15.0465, F.S.; redesignating the official state  
88 flagship as the S.S. American Victory; amending s.  
89 320.084, F.S.; requiring that a free disabled veteran  
90 motor vehicle license plate be issued by the  
91 Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles for  
92 use on any motor vehicle owned or leased by certain  
93 disabled veterans; deleting the requirement that such  
94 plates be issued with the identifying letter  
95 designation of "DV"; authorizing the issuance of a  
96 military license plate with a certain embossing;  
97 providing that certain protections and rights do apply



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to certain military or specialty license plates;  
amending s. 295.124,



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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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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 lines 370 - 396.

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

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete lines 36 - 42

and insert:

394.47891, F.S.;



By Senator Collins

14-01103B-25

20251280\_\_

1 A bill to be entitled  
 2 An act relating to veterans; amending s. 295.124,  
 3 F.S.; updating a reference to federal law relating to  
 4 the designation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs  
 5 as the state approving agency for veterans' education  
 6 and training; amending s. 295.21, F.S.; revising the  
 7 membership of the board of directors of Florida is for  
 8 Veterans, Inc.; conforming provisions to changes made  
 9 by the act; amending s. 295.22, F.S.; renaming the  
 10 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program  
 11 administered by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., as the  
 12 Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; providing that  
 13 grant reimbursements are limited to a specified amount  
 14 per eligible trainee per fiscal year; deleting a  
 15 provision that allowed for reimbursement of only  
 16 permanent full-time employees; providing that training  
 17 costs for a trainee must be equal to or greater than a  
 18 specified amount; revising requirements for a grant  
 19 agreement between the corporation and a business  
 20 requesting funds; authorizing the use of grant funds  
 21 as educational stipends for specified individuals  
 22 while training at locations of the University of  
 23 Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences;  
 24 requiring Florida is for Veterans, Inc., and the  
 25 university to enter into a grant agreement; requiring  
 26 the corporation to determine the amount and structure  
 27 of any educational stipend; specifying that such  
 28 stipends be used only for specified training;  
 29 providing an appropriation; creating s. 295.25, F.S.;

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

14-01103B-25

20251280\_\_

30 prohibiting the Department of State from charging  
 31 veterans who reside in this state fees for the filing  
 32 of specified documents; limiting a veteran's use of  
 33 the exemption; amending s. 322.21, F.S.; providing an  
 34 exemption from driver license fees to members of the  
 35 Florida National Guard and their spouses; amending s.  
 36 379.354, F.S.; providing a reduced fee for persons who  
 37 are active or retired members of the United States  
 38 Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve,  
 39 the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, and  
 40 the United States Coast Guard Reserve for resident  
 41 lifetime hunting licenses and resident lifetime  
 42 sportsman's licenses; amending s. 394.47891, F.S.;  
 43 providing that the chief judge of a judicial circuit  
 44 has the exclusive authority to determine whether  
 45 veterans may participate in the veterans treatment  
 46 court of that circuit; providing an effective date.

47  
 48 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

49  
 50 Section 1. Section 295.124, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
 51 read:

52 295.124 State approving agency for veterans' education and  
 53 training.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall act as the  
 54 state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and  
 55 training, in accordance with 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 ~~38 U.S.C. s. 1771~~  
 56 and the applicable annual contract between the state and the  
 57 Federal Government.

58 Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3), paragraph (a)

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

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59 of subsection (4), and paragraph (c) of subsection (8) of  
 60 section 295.21, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:  
 61 295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—  
 62 (3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:  
 63 (d) Implement the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment  
 64 ~~and Training Services~~ Program established by s. 295.22.  
 65 (4) GOVERNANCE.—  
 66 (a) The corporation shall be governed by a 12-member ~~an 11-~~  
 67 ~~member~~ board of directors. The Governor, the President of the  
 68 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall  
 69 each appoint three voting members to the board. The appointments  
 70 made by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House  
 71 of Representatives may not be from the body over which he or she  
 72 presides. In making appointments, the Governor, the President of  
 73 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
 74 shall must consider representation by active or retired military  
 75 personnel and their spouses, representing a range of ages and  
 76 persons with expertise in business, education, marketing, and  
 77 information management. Additionally, the President of the  
 78 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall  
 79 each appoint one member from the body over which he or she  
 80 presides to serve on the board as ex officio, nonvoting members,  
 81 and the Governor shall appoint one member who is a secretary, or  
 82 his or her designee, with experience in economic or workforce  
 83 development from an executive agency, as an ex officio,  
 84 nonvoting member.  
 85 (8) ANNUAL REPORT.—The corporation shall submit an annual  
 86 progress report and work plan by December 1 to the Governor, the  
 87 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of

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88 Representatives. The report must include:  
 89 (c) Status of the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment  
 90 ~~and Training Services~~ Program administered under s. 295.22.  
 91 Section 3. Section 295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
 92 read:  
 93 295.22 Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment and Training  
 94 ~~Services~~ Program.—  
 95 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—The Legislature finds  
 96 that the state has a compelling interest in ensuring that each  
 97 veteran or his or her spouse who is a resident of this state  
 98 finds employment that meets his or her professional goals and  
 99 receives the training or education necessary to meet those  
 100 goals. The Legislature also finds that connecting dedicated,  
 101 well-trained veterans with businesses that need a dedicated,  
 102 well-trained workforce is of paramount importance. The  
 103 Legislature recognizes that veterans or their spouses may not  
 104 currently have the skills to meet the workforce needs of Florida  
 105 employers and may require assistance in obtaining additional  
 106 workforce training or in transitioning their skills to meet the  
 107 demands of the marketplace. It is the intent of the Legislature  
 108 that the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment and Training  
 109 ~~Services~~ Program coordinate and meet the needs of veterans and  
 110 their spouses and the business community to enhance the economy  
 111 of this state.  
 112 (2) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section, the  
 113 term:  
 114 (a) “Secondary industry business” is a business that the  
 115 state has an additional interest in supporting and for which  
 116 veterans and their spouses may have directly transferable

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117 skills. Such businesses are in the fields of health care,  
118 agriculture, commercial construction, education, law  
119 enforcement, and public service.

120 (b) "Servicemember" means any person serving as a member of  
121 the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active  
122 duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United  
123 States Reserve Forces.

124 (c) "Target industry business" is a business as defined in  
125 s. 288.005.

126 (d) "Target market" means servicemembers of the United  
127 States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge,  
128 veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of  
129 the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes  
130 spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such  
131 individuals who have not remarried.

132 (3) CREATION.—The Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment  
133 ~~and Training Services~~ Program is created within the Department  
134 of Veterans' Affairs to assist in connecting servicemembers,  
135 veterans, or their spouses who are in the target market with  
136 businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and  
137 with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and  
138 resources. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce  
139 demands of businesses in this state by facilitating access to  
140 training and education in high-demand fields for such  
141 individuals and to inspire the growth and development of  
142 veteran-owned small businesses.

143 (4) ADMINISTRATION.—Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall  
144 administer the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment and  
145 ~~Training Services~~ Program and perform all of the following

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146 functions:

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

158 (b) Assist individuals in the target market who reside in  
159 or relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with  
160 target industry or secondary industry businesses. The  
161 corporation shall offer skills assessments to such individuals  
162 and assist them in establishing employment goals and applying  
163 for and achieving gainful employment.

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

169 2. Assistance may include providing the servicemember,  
170 veteran, or his or her spouse with information on current  
171 workforce demand by industry or geographic region, creating  
172 employment goals, and aiding or teaching general knowledge  
173 related to completing applications.

174 3. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by

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

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

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

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

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204 2. Grant reimbursements ~~Costs and expenditures~~ are limited  
205 to \$5,000 ~~\$8,000~~ per eligible trainee per fiscal year. Qualified  
206 businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training  
207 provided before receiving reimbursement from the corporation  
208 ~~equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a~~  
209 ~~permanent, full-time employee.~~ Training costs for a trainee in a  
210 fiscal year must be equal to or greater than \$5,000. Eligible  
211 costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- 212 a. Tuition and fees.  
213 b. Books and classroom materials.  
214 c. Rental fees for facilities.
- 215 3. Before funds are allocated for a request pursuant to  
216 this section, the corporation shall prepare a grant agreement  
217 between the business requesting funds and the corporation. Such  
218 agreement must include, but need not be limited to:
- 219 a. Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct the  
220 instructional program, instructional program description, and  
221 any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.  
222 b. Identification of the ~~estimated~~ duration of the  
223 instructional program.  
224 c. Identification of all direct, training-related costs.  
225 d. Identification of special program requirements that are  
226 not otherwise addressed in the agreement.  
227 e. Permission to access aggregate information specific to  
228 the wages and performance of participants upon the completion of  
229 instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must specify  
230 that any evaluation published subsequent to the instruction may  
231 not identify the employer or any individual participant.  
232 4. A business may receive a grant under any state program

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233 and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

234 5. Notwithstanding subparagraph 2., grant funds may be used  
 235 as educational stipends for individuals in the target market  
 236 while training at any location of the University of Florida  
 237 Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences within this state.  
 238 The corporation and the University of Florida shall enter into  
 239 an agreement before any grant funds are expended, and the  
 240 corporation shall determine the amount and structure of any  
 241 educational stipend. Such stipend may be used only for such  
 242 training for a period of no less than 4 months and no more than  
 243 6 months, in the absence of veteran-specific federally funded  
 244 programs.

245 (e) Contract with one or more entities to administer an  
 246 entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target  
 247 market in this state which connects business leaders in the  
 248 state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.

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

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

255 b. Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran  
 256 entrepreneurs.

257 c. As determined by the corporation, have been recognized  
 258 for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to launch  
 259 successful businesses in this state.

260 2. Each contract must include performance metrics,  
 261 including a focus on employment and business creation. The

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262 entity may also work with a university or college offering  
 263 related programs to refer individuals in the target market or to  
 264 provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may  
 265 include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning  
 266 sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables,  
 267 networking opportunities, support of student organizations,  
 268 speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

269 (f) Administer a SkillBridge initiative for target industry  
 270 and secondary industry businesses in this state and for eligible  
 271 individuals in the target market who reside in, or who wish to  
 272 reside in, this state. In administering the initiative, the  
 273 corporation shall:

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

278 2. Educate businesses, business associations, and eligible  
 279 individuals in the target market on the SkillBridge initiative  
 280 and its benefits, and educate military command and personnel  
 281 within the state on the opportunities available to eligible  
 282 individuals in the target market;

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

287 4. Match eligible individuals in the target market with  
 288 training opportunities offered by the corporation or  
 289 participating businesses, with the intent of having them achieve  
 290 gainful employment in this state upon completion of their

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291 SkillBridge training.

292 (5) COLLABORATION.—

293 (a) The corporation may assist state agencies and entities  
294 with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.295 (b) The corporation is encouraged to, and may collaborate  
296 with state agencies and other entities in efforts to, maximize  
297 access to and provide information on one website that, if  
298 possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact  
299 information, if available, for state agencies and other entities  
300 that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other  
301 resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.302 (c) The corporation may collaborate with other state  
303 agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange,  
304 marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives that  
305 include, but are not limited to, the program created by this  
306 section and those within any of the following:

307 1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

308 a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

309 b. Hope Navigators Program.

310 2. The Department of Commerce:

311 a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and local veteran  
312 employment representatives.313 b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards  
314 employment and recruitment services.

315 c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

316 d. Efforts of the Florida Defense Support Task Force  
317 created under s. 288.987, the Florida Small Business Development  
318 Center Network, and the direct support organization established  
319 in s. 288.012(6).

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

323 4. The Department of Education:

324 a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

325 b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at  
326 public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level  
327 training and education acquired in the military under s.  
328 1004.096.

329 5. The Department of Health:

330 a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

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

333 6. The Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help.

334 Section 4. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$2.5  
335 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
336 appropriated to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the  
337 purposes of funding the Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.,  
338 implementation and administration of the programs described in  
339 ss. 295.21(3)(d), 295.21(3)(f), and 295.22, Florida Statutes.340 Section 5. Section 295.25, Florida Statutes, is created to  
341 read:342 295.25 Veterans exempt from certain filing fees.—The  
343 Department of State may not charge veterans who reside in this  
344 state the applicable fees for filing articles of organization,  
345 articles of incorporation, a certificate of limited partnership,  
346 or a partnership registration statement, or for the designation  
347 of a registered agent, if applicable, as provided in s.  
348 605.0213, s. 607.0122, s. 617.0122, s. 620.1109, or s.

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349 620.81055. A veteran may apply for this exemption only once.  
 350 Section 6. Subsection (7) of section 322.21, Florida  
 351 Statutes, is amended to read:  
 352 322.21 License fees; procedure for handling and collecting  
 353 fees.—  
 354 (7) (a) Any veteran honorably discharged from the Armed  
 355 Forces who has been issued a valid identification card by the  
 356 Department of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with s. 295.17,  
 357 has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans  
 358 Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100-percent total and  
 359 permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation,  
 360 or has been determined to have a service-connected total and  
 361 permanent disability rating of 100 percent, is in receipt of  
 362 disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States  
 363 Armed Services, and who is qualified to obtain a driver license  
 364 under this chapter is exempt from all fees required by this  
 365 section.  
 366 (b) A member of the Florida National Guard who has been  
 367 issued a valid identification card by the Department of Military  
 368 Affairs and his or her spouse are exempt from all fees required  
 369 by this section.  
 370 Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (11) and paragraph  
 371 (a) of subsection (12) of section 379.354, Florida Statutes, are  
 372 amended to read:  
 373 379.354 Recreational licenses, permits, and authorization  
 374 numbers; fees established.—  
 375 (11) RESIDENT LIFETIME HUNTING LICENSES.—  
 376 (a) Lifetime hunting licenses are available to residents  
 377 only, as follows, for:

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

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378 1. Persons 4 years of age or younger, for a fee of \$200.  
 379 2. Persons 5 years of age or older, but under 13 years of  
 380 age, for a fee of \$350.  
 381 3. Persons 13 years of age or older, for a fee of \$500.  
 382 4. Persons who are active or retired members of the United  
 383 States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the  
 384 National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United  
 385 States Coast Guard Reserve, for a fee of \$250.  
 386 (12) RESIDENT LIFETIME SPORTSMAN'S LICENSES.—  
 387 (a) Lifetime sportsman's licenses are available to  
 388 residents only, as follows, for:  
 389 1. Persons 4 years of age or younger, for a fee of \$400.  
 390 2. Persons 5 years of age or older, but under 13 years of  
 391 age, for a fee of \$700.  
 392 3. Persons 13 years of age or older, for a fee of \$1,000.  
 393 4. Persons who are active or retired members of the United  
 394 States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the  
 395 National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United  
 396 States Coast Guard Reserve, for a fee of \$400.  
 397 Section 8. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of section  
 398 394.47891, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:  
 399 394.47891 Veterans treatment court programs.—  
 400 (3) AUTHORIZATION.—  
 401 (d) The chief judge ~~and state attorney~~ of the judicial  
 402 circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court  
 403 program has ~~have~~ the exclusive authority to determine whether  
 404 veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate  
 405 in the veterans treatment court program of ~~within~~ the circuit.  
 406 Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

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



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:** March 7, 2025

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I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #1280**, relating to Veterans, 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", 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.)

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

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BILL: SB 1282

INTRODUCER: Senator Collins

SUBJECT: Public Records/Veterans Florida Opportunity Program

DATE: March 24, 2025

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ingram	Proctor	MS	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AHS	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1282, which is linked to the passage of SB 1280 (2025), amends s. 295.22, F.S., to exempt from public records specified materials and information from private enterprises, state agencies, servicemembers, trainees, and other entities which are received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by Florida is For Veterans, Inc., while administering the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) Program, which is renamed the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program contingent on the passage of SB 1280 (2025).

This exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2030, unless saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

The bill contains a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

The bill creates a new public records exemption and, therefore, requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature for final passage.

The bill will become effective on the same date that SB 1280 (2025) or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

## II. Present Situation:

### Access to Public Records - Generally

The State Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.<sup>1</sup> The right to inspect or copy applies to the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, including all three branches of state government, local governmental entities, and any person acting on behalf of the government.<sup>2</sup>

Additional requirements and exemptions related to public records are found in various statutes and rules, depending on the branch of government involved. For instance, s. 11.0431, F.S., provides public access requirements for legislative records. Relevant exemptions are codified in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S., and adopted in the rules of each house of the legislature.<sup>3</sup> Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420 governs public access to judicial branch records.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, ch. 119, F.S., known as the Public Records Act, provides requirements for public records held by executive agencies.

### Executive Agency Records – The Public Records Act

The Public Records Act provides that all state, county, and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person, and that providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.<sup>5</sup>

Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public records” to include:

[a]ll documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connections with the transaction of official business by any agency.

The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted this definition to encompass all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business that are used to “perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge of some type.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(a).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* See also, *Sarasota Citizens for Responsible Gov’t v. City of Sarasota*, 48 So. 3d 755, 762-763 (Fla. 2010).

<sup>3</sup> See Rule 1.48, *Rules and Manual of the Florida Senate*, (2022-2024) and Rule 14.1, *Rules of the Florida House of Representatives*, Edition 2, (2022-2024).

<sup>4</sup> *State v. Wooten*, 260 So. 3d 1060 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Section 119.01(1), F.S. Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” as “any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.”

<sup>6</sup> *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc., Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

The Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access to public records must be provided. The Public Records Act guarantees every person's right to inspect and copy any public record at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.<sup>7</sup> A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.<sup>8</sup>

The Legislature may exempt public records from public access requirements by passing a general law by a two-thirds vote of both the House and the Senate.<sup>9</sup> The exemption must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.<sup>10</sup>

General exemptions from the public records requirements are contained in the Public Records Act.<sup>11</sup> Specific exemptions often are placed in the substantive statutes relating to a particular agency or program.<sup>12</sup>

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is "exempt" or "confidential and exempt." There is a difference between records the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act and those which the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act *and confidential*.<sup>13</sup> Records designated as "confidential and exempt" are not subject to inspection by the public and may only be released under the circumstances defined by statute.<sup>14</sup> Records designated as "exempt" may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

### **Open Government Sunset Review Act**

The provisions of s. 119.15, F.S., known as the Open Government Sunset Review Act<sup>16</sup> (the Act), prescribe a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended<sup>17</sup> public records or open meetings exemptions, with specified exceptions.<sup>18</sup> The Act requires the repeal of

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<sup>7</sup> Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are the penalties for violating those laws.

<sup>9</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>10</sup> *Id. See, e.g., Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. News-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999) (holding that a public meetings exemption was unconstitutional because the statement of public necessity did not define important terms and did not justify the breadth of the exemption); *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004) (holding that a statutory provision written to bring another party within an existing public records exemption is unconstitutional without a public necessity statement).

<sup>11</sup> *See, e.g., s. 119.071(1)(a), F.S.* (exempting from public disclosure examination questions and answer sheets of examinations administered by a governmental agency for the purpose of licensure).

<sup>12</sup> *See, e.g., s. 213.053(2)(a), F.S.* (exempting from public disclosure information contained in tax returns received by the Department of Revenue).

<sup>13</sup> *WFTV, Inc. v. The Sch. Bd. of Seminole County*, 874 So. 2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 683 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Section 119.15, F.S.

<sup>17</sup> An exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Section 119.15(2)(a) and (b), F.S., provides that exemptions required by federal law or applicable solely to the Legislature or the State Court System are not subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act.

such exemption on October 2 of the fifth year after its creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.<sup>19</sup>

The Act provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary.<sup>20</sup> An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption, and it meets one of the following purposes:

- It allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;<sup>21</sup>
- It protects sensitive, personal information, the release of which would be defamatory, cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of the individual, or would jeopardize the individual's safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;<sup>22</sup> or
- It protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, such as trade or business secrets.<sup>23</sup>

The Act also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.<sup>24</sup> In examining an exemption, the Act directs the Legislature to question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If the exemption is continued and expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are again required.<sup>25</sup> If the exemption is continued without substantive changes or if the exemption is continued and narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to expire, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless otherwise provided by law.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Section 119.15(3), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

- What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
- Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
- What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
- Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means?  
If so, how?
- Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?
- Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

<sup>25</sup> See generally s. 119.15, F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 119.15(7), F.S.

## Trade Secrets

In accordance with s. 119.0715, F.S., a trade secret<sup>27</sup> held by an agency is confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution. An agency may disclose a trade secret to an officer or employee of another agency or governmental entity whose use of the trade secret is within the scope of his or her lawful duties and responsibilities. An agency employee who, while acting in good faith and in the performance of his or her duties, releases a record containing a trade secret pursuant to Ch. 119, F.S., is not liable, civilly or criminally, for such release.

## Florida is For Veterans, Inc.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) is a nonprofit corporation within the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA), created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.<sup>28</sup> Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence.<sup>29</sup> Veterans Florida also assists veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and encourages the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community which lends to its mission in assisting veterans fully transition to civilian life.<sup>30</sup> Veterans Florida has many duties, including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing, awareness, and outreach activities toward its target market.<sup>31</sup>
- Promoting and enhancing the value of military skill sets to businesses.
- Implementing and administering the Veterans Employment and Training Services program and administering other relevant programs.
- Managing all funds received in a responsible and prudent manner and ensuring that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements.<sup>32</sup>

## Veteran Employment and Training Services (VETS) Program

Created within the FDVA, the VETS program assists in connecting servicemembers, 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.<sup>33</sup> The purpose of the VETS program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields and to inspire the growth of veteran owned small businesses.<sup>34</sup> In accordance with its duties under s. 252.21(3), F.S.,

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<sup>27</sup> Section 688.002, F.S., defines “trade secret” to mean information, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that: derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use; and is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

<sup>28</sup> Ch. 2014-1, s. 12, Laws of Fla. See s. 295.21(1) and (2), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Dep’t of Veterans’ Affairs, *Florida is for Veterans, Inc., Brands as Veterans Florida*, available at <https://floridavets.org/florida-is-for-veterans-inc-brands-as-veterans-florida/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>30</sup> Section 295.21(2), F.S.

<sup>31</sup> Section 295.21(3)(a), F.S., defines “target market” to mean servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried.

<sup>32</sup> Section 295.21(3), F.S., identifies all of the duties required of Veterans Florida.

<sup>33</sup> Section 295.22(3), F.S.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

Veterans Florida administers the VETS program and performs many functions including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts.
- Assisting individuals in the target market<sup>35</sup> who reside in or relocate to Florida and who seek employment with the target industry or secondary target industry business.
- Offering skills assessments and assisting in establishing employment goals.
- Assisting Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target market. Veterans Florida provides services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable 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.
- Providing information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist individuals in the target market 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.
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target market in Florida which connects business leaders in the state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.
- Administering a SkillBridge<sup>36</sup> initiative for target industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state.<sup>37</sup>

Under the VETS program, Veterans Florida may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.<sup>38</sup> Veterans Florida may collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives.<sup>39</sup> Veterans Florida may also collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives that include, but are not limited to, the VETS program and those within any of the following:

- The Department of Veterans' Affairs:
  - Access to benefits and assistance programs.
  - Hope Navigators Program.
- The Department of Commerce:
  - 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.
  - Efforts of the Florida Defense Support Task Force, replaced by a Department of Commerce direct-support organization in 2024, under s. 288.987, F.S.,<sup>40</sup> the Florida

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> See U.S. Dep't of Defense, DOD SkillBridge, Program Overview-What is SkillBridge, available at <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/program-overview.htm> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>37</sup> Section 295.22(4), F.S.

<sup>38</sup> Section 295.22(5), F.S.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Ch. 2024-234, Laws of Fla.

Small Business Development Center Network, and the direct support organization established in s. 288.012(6), F.S.

- The Department of Business and Professional Regulation, reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.
- The Department of Education:
  - CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44, F.S.
  - 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, F.S.
- The Department of Health:
  - The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.
  - The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.
- The Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help.

## **SB 1280 Veterans (2025)**

### ***Employment and Training Services***

SB 1280 (2025), to which this bill is linked, renames the VETS program as the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program. SB 1280 revises additional provisions regarding the VETS program including grant reimbursement limitations and training cost determinations. SB 1280 also authorizes grant funds to be used as educational stipends for certain trainees at any location in this state of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and requires Veterans Florida and the University of Florida to enter into an agreement before grant funds are expended.

### **Job Applicants and Trainees**

#### ***State of Florida***

As a business arm of Florida government, the Department of Management Services' primary mission is to support other state agencies as well as current and former state employees with workforce and business-related functions.<sup>41</sup> Workforce operations, one of DMS' service areas, is charged with managing the state personnel system, which includes People First.<sup>42</sup> People First is the state's online, self-service platform that supplies the public-facing job site.<sup>43</sup> Job applicants with the state are informed that all information provided will be a public record. Such information is released upon request unless exempt or confidential.<sup>44</sup> Those persons exempt from public records disclosure include current or former law enforcement officers, other covered employees including, but are not limited to correctional and correctional probation officers, firefighters, certain judges, assistant state attorneys, state attorneys, assistant and statewide

<sup>41</sup> Dep't of Management Services, *About Us*, available at [https://www.dms.myflorida.com/about\\_us](https://www.dms.myflorida.com/about_us) (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>42</sup> Dep't of Management Services, *Workforce Operations*, available at [https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce\\_operations](https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce_operations) (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>43</sup> Dep't of Management Services, *People First*, available at [https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce\\_operations/people\\_first](https://www.dms.myflorida.com/workforce_operations/people_first) (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>44</sup> People First-Florida Jobs, *State of Florida Job Application*, available at [https://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/division-of-finance-and-administration/forms/personnel/stateemploymentapp.pdf?sfvrsn=643d56b0\\_2](https://www.floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/division-of-finance-and-administration/forms/personnel/stateemploymentapp.pdf?sfvrsn=643d56b0_2) (March 21, 2025).

prosecutors, personnel of the Department of Revenue or local governments whose responsibilities include revenue collection and enforcement or child support enforcement, and certain investigators in the Department of Children and Families, or the spouse or child of one, whose information is exempt from public records disclosure under s. 119.071(4)(d), F.S.

***CareerSource Florida, Inc. (CareerSource Florida)***

CareerSource Florida collaborates with the Florida Department of Commerce to connect Florida job seekers with employment and career development opportunities to achieve economic success, and employers with competent, skilled talent.<sup>45</sup> CareerSource is composed of 21 local development boards offering resources and programs across the state.<sup>46</sup>

CareerSource Capital Region, a local development board, uses Employ Florida as a one-stop resource for career seekers looking for a job, education or training opportunities or who are in need of assistance with benefits or resume and letter building.<sup>47</sup> To connect to Employ Florida's resources, an individual may register on Employ Florida's website.<sup>48</sup> The registrant must agree to the privacy agreement which specifies that the information provided by the individual via the website is subject to public disclosure unless expressly exempt under state or federal law.<sup>49</sup> The privacy agreement also specifies that the registrant understands and agrees to being responsible for personal information that he or she submits to an employer.<sup>50</sup>

The Legislature found that public policy dictates that CareerSource Florida operate in the most open and accessible manner consistent with its public purpose. To this end, the Legislature specifically declared that CareerSource Florida, its board, councils, and any advisory committees or similar groups created by CareerSource Florida are subject to the provisions of chapter 119, F.S., relating to public records, and those provisions of chapter 286, F.S., relating to public meetings.<sup>51</sup>

However, most, if not all, of the personal identifiable information of those seeking assistance through CareerSource Florida is protected by various laws, depending on the program they are being served under. For example:

- Temporary cash assistance programs.<sup>52</sup>
- Reemployment assistance programs.<sup>53</sup>
- Public assistance programs.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Dep't of Commerce, *2024 Annual Report*, available at [https://floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/division-of-strategic-business-development/annual-report-2023-24-final.pdf?sfvrsn=c0d322b0\\_1](https://floridajobs.org/docs/default-source/division-of-strategic-business-development/annual-report-2023-24-final.pdf?sfvrsn=c0d322b0_1) (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>47</sup> Career Source Capital Region, *Career Seekers – Employ Florida*, available at <https://www.careersourcecapitalregion.com/job-seekers/efm> (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>48</sup> Employ Florida, *Sign In/Register*, available at <https://www.employflorida.com/vosnet/LoginIntro2.aspx?enc=vLa15KtdCzQOMP6jrcRdlQ==> (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>49</sup> Employ Florida, *Sign In/Register*, available at <https://www.employflorida.com/vosnet/privacy/privacyagreement.aspx?rt=n&strAgreementLang=E&plang=E&action=&newregistration=1> (last visited March 21, 2025).

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Section 445.004(1), F.S.

<sup>52</sup> Section 414.295(1), F.S.

<sup>53</sup> Section 443.1715(1), F.S.

<sup>54</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 65A-1.



- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.<sup>55</sup>
- Federal-State Unemployment Compensation program.<sup>56</sup>
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act equal opportunity data and other information by recipients of WIOA funds.<sup>57</sup>
- Public welfare requirements.<sup>58</sup>

### **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)<sup>59</sup>**

To provide the public with a right of access to federal government records, Congress passed the FOIA in 1966. In accordance with the FOIA, the public has the right to request access to records of the Executive Branch of government and agencies in turn are required to provide copies of those records to the requester except to the extent that any records, or portions of records, contain information that is protected from mandatory disclosure. Certain information contained within those records that would, for example, invade a person's personal privacy, reveal confidential commercial information, impede law enforcement, or reveal privileged communications was protected from mandatory disclosure by Congress. The FOIA also requires agencies to proactively post online certain types of records, including those that have been frequently requested.<sup>60</sup>

On June 30, 2016, President Obama signed into law the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016,<sup>61</sup> which contained substantive and procedural amendments to the FOIA and new reporting requirements for agencies. The FOIA does not provide access to records held by Congress, the federal courts, advisory offices of the President, state or local government agencies, or by private businesses or individuals because it applies only to records of the Executive Branch of the federal government. All states have their own statutes governing public access to state and local government records.<sup>62</sup>

Information that is released to the public from federal records depends on whether a person requests information that FOIA allows to be released or if a person or their next of kin authorizes its release. The government can only release limited information from official military personnel files without authorization of the servicemember or his or her next of kin after the servicemember's death. Such information that can be released includes:

- Name and photograph.
- Dates and branch of service.
- Duty status and rank.
- Duty assignments.
- Military education, awards and decorations.
- Transcripts of courts-martial trials.

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<sup>55</sup> 7 CFR 272.1(c).

<sup>56</sup> 20 CFR Part 603.

<sup>57</sup> 29 CFR s. 38.41.

<sup>58</sup> 45 CFR s. 205.50.

<sup>59</sup> Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. s. 552.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *About the FOIA*, available at <https://www.justice.gov/oip/about-foia> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>61</sup> Public Law No. 114-185.

<sup>62</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, *supra* note 60.

- Home of record (identification of state only).<sup>63</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 295.22 F.S., to create a public records exemption making confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution materials that relate to methods of manufacture or production, potential trade secrets, potentially patentable material, actual trade secrets, workforce training plans, business transactions, business plans, military records, skills assessments and career goals, resumes and contact information, certificates, financial and proprietary information, and agreements or proposals to receive funding which are received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by Veterans Florida, Inc., including partnership and training participants, such as private enterprises, educational institutions, and other organizations, for the purposes of the administration of the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program.<sup>64</sup>

The bill provides that aggregated data with no personal identifying information for reporting purposes is not exempt.

The exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act in accordance with s. 119.15, F.S., and will stand repealed on October 2, 2030, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

The bill provides the constitutionally required public necessity statement that the information pertaining to an individual or organization that seeks assistance, services, or training under the administration provisions of the Veterans Florida Opportunity program<sup>65</sup> be made confidential and exempt. The statement provides that making information, such as resumes of job seekers, entrepreneurship business plans, and employer workforce training plans and curricula, publicly available exposes those individuals and organizations to risk of loss of personal privacy and theft of confidential business information. The bill further provides that without the public records exemption, the state would be unable to effectively and efficiently implement and administer the Veterans Florida Opportunity program.

The bill takes effect on the same date that SB 1280 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law. SB 1280 takes effect July 1, 2025.

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<sup>63</sup> Military One Source, *Financial & Legal, Legal, Service Member Privacy vs. Public Access to Information*, available at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/legal/service-member-privacy-versus-public-access-to-information/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

<sup>64</sup> Section 295.22(4), F.S., provides for the administration of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, renamed as the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program which is contingent on the passage of SB 1280 (2025).

<sup>65</sup> Section 295.22(4), F.S.

#### IV. Constitutional Issues:

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The mandate restrictions do not apply because the bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds, reduce counties or municipalities' ability to raise revenue, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

##### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

###### **Vote Requirement**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records disclosure requirements.

This bill enacts a new exemption for materials that relate to methods of manufacture or production, potential trade secrets, potentially patentable material, actual trade secrets, workforce training plans, business transactions, business plans, military records, skills assessments and career goals, resumes and contact information, certificates, financial and proprietary information, and agreements or proposals to receive funding which are received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by Veterans Florida. This exemption also includes the exemption for partnership and training participants, such as private enterprises, educational institutions, and other organizations, for the purposes of administering the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program.<sup>66</sup>

###### **Public Necessity Statement**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records disclosure requirements to state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption.

Section 2 of the bill contains a statement of public necessity which specifies that the Legislature finds the Veterans Florida Opportunity program, administered by Veterans Florida, in order to provide assistance, services, and training to separating servicemembers, veterans, and others through organizations such as employers, nonprofits, and universities in the areas of career placement and training and entrepreneurship training to support workforce and economic development within this state. The statement also specifies that making information, such as resumes of job seekers, entrepreneurship business plans, and employer workforce training plans and curricula, publicly available exposes those individuals and organizations to risk of loss of personal privacy and theft of confidential business information; and without the public records exemption, the state would be unable to effectively and efficiently implement and administer the program.

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<sup>66</sup> Section 295.22(4), F.S., provides for the administration of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, renamed as the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program contingent on the passage of SB 1280 (2025).

### **Breadth of Exemption**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires an exemption to the public records requirements to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.

Section 2 of the bill provides the purpose of the proposed public records exemption is to protect individuals and organizations from a risk of loss of personal privacy and theft of confidential business information. The bill proposes exemptions which protect a wide range of materials and information pertaining to private enterprises, educational institutions, state agencies, servicemembers, trainees, and other entities<sup>67</sup> which are connected in some manner to the administration of the Veterans Florida Opportunity program and the functions of Veterans Florida as it relates to the program.<sup>68</sup> The bill exempts all of the following: materials that relate to methods of manufacture or production; potential trade secrets; potentially patentable material; actual trade secrets; workforce training plans; business transactions; business plans; military records; skills assessments and career goals; resumes and contact information; certificates; financial and proprietary information; and agreements or proposals to receive funding which are received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by Veterans Florida, including partnership and training participants, such as private enterprises, educational institutions, and other organizations, for the purposes of administering the Veterans Florida Opportunity program.<sup>69</sup>

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None identified.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None identified.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None identified.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

The private sector may be subject to the cost associated with Veterans Florida's review and redaction of exempt records in response to a public records request.

<sup>67</sup> Section 295.22(5), F.S.,

<sup>68</sup> See s. 295.22(4), F.S.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

### C. Government Sector Impact:

Veterans Florida staff responsible for compliance with public record requests may require training related to the new public record exemptions and may experience additional workload associated with the redaction of exempt information prior to the release of a record. This workload may be absorbed as part of day-to-day responsibilities.

State agencies and other governmental entities working with Veterans Florida may experience additional workload associated with the redaction of exempt information prior to the release of a record. This workload may be absorbed as part of day-to-day responsibilities.

### VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The bill on lines 171-178, provide that “military records, skills assessments and career goals, resumes and contact information ... for the purposes of administering ...” the Veterans Florida Opportunity Program will be confidential and exempt. Records designated as “confidential and exempt” are not subject to inspection by the public and may only be released under the circumstances defined by statute.<sup>70</sup> This may hinder Veterans Florida’s ability to train and employ servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses, as Veterans Florida may be unable to share military records, skills assessments, career goals, resumes, and contact information of those individuals for training or employment purposes unless provided for in statute.

### VII. Related Issues:

To provide that an exemption from the public records requirements be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law, some sections of statute such as s. 288.075, F.S., that deal with making business plans, trade secrets,<sup>71</sup> and other proprietary confidential business information<sup>72</sup> confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution, require a business entity to request in writing that the confidentiality of such information be maintained by the receiving entity. The request for confidentiality is then maintained for a period of 12 months after it has been received or until the information is otherwise disclosed, whichever occurs first, and has provisions for extensions should they be necessary.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *WFTV, Inc. v. The Sch. Bd. of Seminole County*, 874 So. 2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

<sup>71</sup> Section 688.002, F.S., defines “trade secret” to mean information, including a formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that: derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use; and is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

<sup>72</sup> Section 288.075, F.S., defines “proprietary confidential business information” to mean information that is owned or controlled by the corporation, partnership, or person requesting confidentiality under s. 288.075, F.S.; that is intended to be and is treated by the corporation, partnership, or person as private in that the disclosure of the information would cause harm to the business operations of the corporation, partnership, or person; that has not been disclosed unless disclosed pursuant to a statutory provision, an order of a court or administrative body, or a private agreement providing that the information may be released to the public; and that is information concerning: business plans, internal auditing controls and reports of internal auditors, and reports of external auditors for privately held companies.

<sup>73</sup> Section 288.075(2), F.S.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 295.22 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.

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

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By Senator Collins

14-00432A-25

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1 A bill to be entitled  
 2 An act relating to public records; amending s. 295.22,  
 3 F.S.; providing an exemption from public records  
 4 requirements for specified materials and information  
 5 received, generated, ascertained, or discovered by  
 6 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., while administering the  
 7 Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; providing for  
 8 future legislative review and repeal of the exemption;  
 9 providing a statement of public necessity; providing a  
 10 contingent effective date.

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

12 Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 295.22, Florida  
 13 Statutes, as amended by SB 1280, 2025 Regular Session, is  
 14 amended to read:

15 295.22 Veterans Florida Opportunity Program.—

16 (4) ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION.—

17 (a) Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall administer the  
 18 Veterans Florida Opportunity Program and perform all of the  
 19 following functions:

20 1.~~(a)~~ Conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at  
 21 individuals within the target market who reside in or have an  
 22 interest in relocating to this state and who are seeking  
 23 employment. Marketing must include information related to how  
 24 military experience can be valuable to a target industry or  
 25 secondary industry business. Such efforts may include attending  
 26 job fairs and events; hosting events for servicemembers,  
 27 veterans, and their spouses or the business community; and using  
 28  
 29

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

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30 digital and social media and direct mail campaigns. The  
 31 corporation shall also include such marketing as part of its  
 32 main marketing campaign.  
 33 2.~~(b)~~ Assist individuals in the target market who reside in  
 34 or relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with  
 35 target industry or secondary industry businesses. The  
 36 corporation shall offer skills assessments to such individuals  
 37 and assist them in establishing employment goals and applying  
 38 for and achieving gainful employment.  
 39 a.1. Assessment may include skill match information, skill  
 40 gap analysis, résumé creation, translation of military skills  
 41 into civilian workforce skills, and translation of military  
 42 achievements and experience into generally understood civilian  
 43 workforce skills.  
 44 b.2. Assistance may include providing the servicemember,  
 45 veteran, or his or her spouse with information on current  
 46 workforce demand by industry or geographic region, creating  
 47 employment goals, and aiding or teaching general knowledge  
 48 related to completing applications.  
 49 c.3. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by  
 50 electronic means, as determined by the corporation to be most  
 51 efficient and best meet the needs of veterans or their spouses.  
 52 3.~~(c)~~ Assist Florida target industry and secondary industry  
 53 businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target  
 54 market. The corporation shall provide services to Florida  
 55 businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses  
 56 with suitable applicants for employment. Suitable applicants  
 57 include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job  
 58 skills or may need additional training to meet the specific

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

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

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

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

79 ~~b.2-~~ Grant reimbursements are limited to \$5,000 per  
80 eligible trainee per fiscal year. Qualified businesses must  
81 cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before  
82 receiving reimbursement from the corporation. Training costs for  
83 a trainee in a fiscal year must be equal to or greater than  
84 \$5,000. Eligible costs and expenditures include, but are not  
85 limited to:

86 ~~(I)a-~~ Tuition and fees.

87 ~~(II)b-~~ Books and classroom materials.

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88 ~~(III)e-~~ Rental fees for facilities.

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

93 ~~(I)a-~~ Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct  
94 the instructional program, instructional program description,  
95 and any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.

96 ~~(II)b-~~ Identification of the duration of the instructional  
97 program.

98 ~~(III)e-~~ Identification of all direct, training-related  
99 costs.

100 ~~(IV)d-~~ Identification of special program requirements that  
101 are not otherwise addressed in the agreement.

102 ~~(V)e-~~ Permission to access aggregate information specific  
103 to the wages and performance of participants upon the completion  
104 of instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must  
105 specify that any evaluation published subsequent to the  
106 instruction may not identify the employer or any individual  
107 participant.

108 ~~d.4-~~ A business may receive a grant under any state program  
109 and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

110 ~~e.5-~~ Notwithstanding ~~sub-subparagraph b. subparagraph 2-~~,  
111 grant funds may be used as educational stipends for individuals  
112 in the target market while training at any location of the  
113 University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural  
114 Sciences within this state. The corporation and the University  
115 of Florida shall enter into an agreement before any grant funds  
116 are expended, and the corporation shall determine the amount and



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 117 structure of any educational stipend. Such stipend may be used  
 118 only for such training for a period of no less than 4 months and  
 119 no more than 6 months, in the absence of veteran-specific  
 120 federally funded programs.

121 ~~5.(e)~~ Contract with one or more entities to administer an  
 122 entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target  
 123 market in this state which connects business leaders in the  
 124 state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.

125 ~~a.1-~~ The corporation shall award each contract in  
 126 accordance with the competitive bidding requirements in s.  
 127 287.057 to one or more public or private entities that:

128 ~~(I)a-~~ Demonstrate the ability to implement the program and  
 129 the commitment of resources, including financial resources, to  
 130 such programs.

131 ~~(II)b-~~ Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran  
 132 entrepreneurs.

133 ~~(III)e-~~ As determined by the corporation, have been  
 134 recognized for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to  
 135 launch successful businesses in this state.

136 ~~b.2-~~ Each contract must include performance metrics,  
 137 including a focus on employment and business creation. The  
 138 entity may also work with a university or college offering  
 139 related programs to refer individuals in the target market or to  
 140 provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may  
 141 include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning  
 142 sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables,  
 143 networking opportunities, support of student organizations,  
 144 speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

145 ~~6.(f)~~ Administer a SkillBridge initiative for target

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 146 industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for  
 147 eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who  
 148 wish to reside in, this state. In administering the initiative,  
 149 the corporation shall:

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

154 ~~b.2-~~ Educate businesses, business associations, and  
 155 eligible individuals in the target market on the SkillBridge  
 156 initiative and its benefits, and educate military command and  
 157 personnel within the state on the opportunities available to  
 158 eligible individuals in the target market;

159 ~~c.3-~~ Assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled  
 160 workforce training curricula under the SkillBridge initiative,  
 161 including, but not limited to, apprenticeships, internships, or  
 162 fellowships; and

163 ~~d.4-~~ Match eligible individuals in the target market with  
 164 training opportunities offered by the corporation or  
 165 participating businesses, with the intent of having them achieve  
 166 gainful employment in this state upon completion of their  
 167 SkillBridge training.

168 (b) Materials that relate to methods of manufacture or  
 169 production, potential trade secrets, potentially patentable  
 170 material, actual trade secrets, workforce training plans,  
 171 business transactions, business plans, military records, skills  
 172 assessments and career goals, resumes and contact information,  
 173 certificates, financial and proprietary information, and  
 174 agreements or proposals to receive funding which are received,

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 175 generated, ascertained, or discovered by Florida Is For  
 176 Veterans, Inc., including partnership and training participants,  
 177 such as private enterprises, educational institutions, and other  
 178 organizations, for the purposes of administering this subsection  
 179 are confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art.  
 180 I of the State Constitution. Aggregated data with no personal  
 181 identifying information for reporting purposes is not exempt.  
 182 This paragraph is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review  
 183 Act in accordance with s. 119.15 and shall stand repealed on  
 184 October 2, 2030, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through  
 185 reenactment by the Legislature.

186 Section 2. The Legislature finds that it is a public  
 187 necessity that information pertaining to an individual or  
 188 organization that seeks assistance, services, or training under  
 189 s. 295.22(4), Florida Statutes, be made confidential and exempt  
 190 from public records requirements under s. 119.07(1), Florida  
 191 Statutes, and s. 24(a), Article I of the State Constitution. The  
 192 Legislature created Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., and funds the  
 193 program under s. 295.22(4), Florida Statutes, administered by  
 194 the corporation, in order to provide assistance, services, and  
 195 training to separating servicemembers, veterans, and others  
 196 through organizations such as employers, nonprofits, and  
 197 universities in the areas of career placement and training and  
 198 entrepreneurship training to support workforce and economic  
 199 development within this state. Making information, such as  
 200 resumes of job seekers, entrepreneurship business plans, and  
 201 employer workforce training plans and curricula, publicly  
 202 available exposes those individuals and organizations to risk of  
 203 loss of personal privacy and theft of confidential business

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 204 information. Without the public records exemption, the state  
 205 would be unable to effectively and efficiently implement and  
 206 administer the program.

207 Section 3. This act shall take effect on the same date that  
 208 SB 1280 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation  
 209 is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension  
 210 thereof and becomes a law.



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:** March 7, 2025

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I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #1282**, relating to Public Records/Veterans Florida Opportunity Program, 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", written over a horizontal line.

Senator Jay Collins  
Florida Senate, District 14