

By Senators Meek and Diaz de la Portilla

36-1120-02

See HB

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to empowerment zones; amending  
3           s. 290.0491, F.S., the Florida Empowerment Zone  
4           Act; providing legislative findings and intent;  
5           providing for annual funding of the Florida  
6           Empowerment Zone Program for the remaining  
7           years of the program; providing an  
8           appropriation; providing an effective date.

9  
10 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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12           Section 1. Section 290.0491, Florida Statutes, is  
13 amended to read:

14           290.0491 Florida Empowerment Zones.--

15           (1) SHORT TITLE.--This section may be cited as the  
16 "Florida Empowerment Zone Act."

17           (2) DEFINITIONS.--As used in this section, the term:

18           (a) "Department" means the Department of Community  
19 Affairs.

20           (b) "Federal Empowerment Zone Program" means the  
21 empowerment zone program established in 26 U.S.C. ss. 1391 et  
22 seq.

23           (c) "Nominated area" means an area nominated for  
24 participation in the Federal Empowerment Zone Program.

25           (d) "Sponsoring designee" means the lead entity that  
26 applied for and received the empowerment zone designation, but  
27 does not include other entities that joined in the  
28 application.

29           (3) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.--

30           (a) The Legislature recognizes that it is in the  
31 public interest that the state create economic opportunity in

1 poverty-stricken areas and rebuild such areas by empowering  
2 the people and communities within these areas to create jobs  
3 and opportunities. The United States Congress in 1997 provided  
4 that an additional 20 areas may be designated as federal  
5 empowerment zones by January 1, 1999, and, as such, be  
6 eligible for federal funding under the Federal Empowerment  
7 Zone Program. The Legislature seeks to promote local  
8 governments in submitting the strongest possible proposals  
9 under the Federal Empowerment Zone Program by establishing a  
10 companion state empowerment zone program.

11 (b) In 1998, the Governor, the President of the  
12 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
13 provided letters to the Federal Government indicating that the  
14 State of Florida was prepared to commit between \$50 million  
15 and \$100 million in state funds over the 10 years of the  
16 program to any designated empowerment zone in the state.  
17 During the 1999 Regular Session, the Legislature passed House  
18 Bill 297, which became chapter 99-342, Laws of Florida, and  
19 which created the Florida Empowerment Zone Act codified in  
20 this section. In conjunction with creating the program and  
21 during the same legislative session, the Legislature  
22 appropriated \$3,275,000 to the urban-sponsoring empowerment  
23 zone designee and \$225,000 to the rural-sponsoring designee or  
24 rural enterprise community. However, since creating the  
25 program, the Legislature has not appropriated any funds under  
26 the program for the urban-sponsoring designee or the  
27 rural-sponsoring designee or rural enterprise community. It  
28 is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature to provide for  
29 the funding of the program for its remaining years, beginning  
30 with fiscal year 2002-2003.

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1           (4) EMPOWERMENT ZONE PROGRAM.--There is created an  
2 economic development program to be known as the Florida  
3 Empowerment Zone Program. The program shall exist for 10 years  
4 and, except as otherwise provided by law, be operated by the  
5 Department of Community Affairs in conjunction with the  
6 Federal Empowerment Zone Program.

7           (5) FUNDING.--Beginning in fiscal year 2002-2003, the  
8 Legislature shall appropriate funds on a recurring annual  
9 basis in an amount not less than \$7 million per year for each  
10 of the remaining years of the program for the purpose of  
11 implementing this section. Such funds shall be distributed by  
12 the department to any local government within the state that  
13 has applied for and been awarded the federal empowerment zone  
14 designation pursuant to 26 U.S.C. s. 1391(g). Such funds  
15 shall be used for the benefit of the nominated area and shall  
16 be contingent upon the local government receiving federal  
17 matching funds under the Federal Empowerment Zone Program and  
18 meeting the local matching requirements imposed by regulations  
19 of the federal program.

20           Section 2. The sum of \$7 million is appropriated from  
21 the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Community  
22 Affairs for fiscal year 2002-2003 to carry out the purposes of  
23 s. 290.0491, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

24           Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2002.

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27           LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

28           Provides for annual funding of the Florida Empowerment  
29           Zone Program for the remaining years of the program.