

# SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

Prepared By: Environmental Preservation Committee

BILL: SB 1638

INTRODUCER: Senator Baker

SUBJECT: State Parks/ Florida National Guard

DATE: March 15, 2006

REVISED: 3/20/06

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Baum</u>	<u>Kiger</u>	<u>EP</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
2.	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u>GA</u>	<u></u>
3.	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
4.	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
5.	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
6.	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>

## Please see last section for Summary of Amendments

- Technical amendments were recommended
- Amendments were recommended
- Significant amendments were recommended

### I. Summary:

The bill will allow members of the Florida National Guard (FNG), their spouses and minor children, free admission to state parks.

The revenue impact to the Division of Recreation and Parks (the Division) within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is estimated to be anywhere from \$560,000 to \$1.2 million depending on the factors used to calculate park attendance.

This bill creates an undesignated section in Florida law which would take effect on July 1, 2006.

### II. Present Situation:

The Army National Guard began on December 13, 1636, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony organized three militia regiments to defend colonists against the growing threat of the Pequot Indians. Today, the Army National Guard continues its historic mission of providing defense for the nation.<sup>1</sup> According to the Florida Department of Military Affairs (DMA), there are currently

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.1800goguard.com/whatistheguard/whatis\\_history.html](http://www.1800goguard.com/whatistheguard/whatis_history.html)

about 11,400 traditional National Guardsmen and the DMA is authorized to have a maximum of 12,000 guard members.<sup>2</sup>

Florida's state park system is one of the largest in the country with 159 parks spanning more than 723,000 acres and 100 miles of sandy white beach. Under the DEP, the Division of Recreation and Parks operates and maintains these parks. The state park admission fees are the parks' sole source of revenue and are used to pay salaries and other operating costs. State park revenues during the last fiscal year were approximately \$36.8 million. Annual operating and capital budgets for the 2004-2005 fiscal year totaled around \$75 million. In order to cover the annual budgetary shortfalls encountered by the state parks, funds are transferred from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Approximately \$35 million has been transferred in each of the last two fiscal years.<sup>3</sup>

In 2003-2004, approximately 19.1 million people visited Florida's award-winning state parks which set an all-time record for attendance statewide.<sup>4</sup> However, due to an active storm season in the last fiscal year, attendance fell to approximately 17.3 million people.

Entrance and admission fees to state parks may be charged in a variety of ways. Fees may be charged to individuals, or per carload (up to eight people). The amount of the fee is charged based on which park visitors are entering. The average admission fee is about \$2.<sup>5</sup> Individuals may purchase an annual pass for \$43.40 (sales tax included), and families may purchase an annual pass for \$85.80 (sales tax included).<sup>6</sup> Approximately 14,300 annual family passes and 17,600 annual individual passes were sold in 2004-2005.<sup>7</sup>

Section 258.014, F.S. authorizes the Division to charge reasonable fees for the use of state parks including:

- Fees for rentals or charges for the use or operation of facilities.
- Fees or charges for concessions.

Historically, the state park system has allowed groups of military personnel and their families' no-cost admission for scheduled outings.

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

The bill allows members of the Florida National Guard, their spouses and minor children, free admission into Florida state parks.

If enacted, the bill would take effect on July 1, 2006.

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<sup>2</sup> Per conversation with Florida Department of Military Affairs.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Division of Recreation and Parks

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2004/july/0721\\_1.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2004/july/0721_1.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Environmental Protection, Legislative Affairs

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.floridastateparks.org/information/fees.cfm#Daily> and

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/information/fees.cfm#Annual>

<sup>7</sup> Department of Environmental Protection, Legislative Affairs

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

None.

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

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

A family of an active FNG member could save \$85.80 (sales tax included) per year if they normally purchased an annual pass, or they could save \$3, \$4, or \$5 per visit, depending on the park, if they were not on an annual plan.

An active FNG individual could save \$43.40 (sales tax included) per year if they normally purchased an annual pass, or they could save \$3, \$4, or \$5 per visit, depending on the park, if they were not on an annual plan.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The DEP estimates a revenue impact of \$1.2 million.<sup>8</sup> This impact assumes that the current FNG strength was 15,000 members and that each FNG would be equivalent to the loss of the \$80 family annual pass (without sales tax). Assuming the number of FNG equals 11,400 members as stated by the Florida Department of Military Affairs, the revenue impact would be \$912,000 based on DEP's calculation method.

Further review by the committee staff has estimated a different fiscal impact that the bill may have on the DEP. According to the "Florida: Estimates of Population 2005" packet published in 2006 by the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research, the population of Florida residents in 2005 totaled approximately 18 million people. Therefore, it can be calculated that all current FNG represent approximately 0.06% of the 2005 total Florida population.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Environmental Protection. Draft Bill Analysis 2006: SB 1638.

<sup>9</sup> 11,400 / 18 million = 0.06%

Results of a study of state park visitors conducted by the University of Florida's recreation department in 2000 showed that approximately 66% of all visitors to Florida state parks are Florida residents. Based on the 2004-2005 total number of park visitors, Florida residents accounted for approximately 11.4 million of the 17.3 million visitors.<sup>10</sup> Using 0.06% as a percentage of representation for FNG, as shown above, it can be calculated that of the 11.4 million in-state Florida residents who visited Florida state parks last year, approximately 6,900 were FNG members.<sup>11</sup> Based on this assumption, and also on the assumption that the every one of the 6,900 FNG bought an annual family pass for \$80, the total fiscal impact would be approximately \$550,000.<sup>12</sup>

Because there are different types of admission fees to state parks, including different daily entrance fees which vary between state parks and the sale of individual annual passes, the actual fiscal impacts are difficult to estimate.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

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

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<sup>10</sup>  $66\% * 17.3\text{million} = 11.4\text{ million}$

<sup>11</sup>  $.06\% * 11.4\text{ million} = 6,900\text{ people}$

<sup>12</sup>  $6,900 * \$80 = \$550,000$

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## **VIII. Summary of Amendments:**

### **Barcode 060824 by Environmental Preservation:**

The amendment adopted by the Committee clarifies that Florida National Guard members must present a valid active member or dependent identification card upon entrance into a state park in order to receive free admission. (WITH TITLE AMENDMENT)

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