

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee

BILL: SB 1974

INTRODUCER: Senator Diaz da la Portilla

SUBJECT: State Parks - Military Personnel

DATE: March 31, 2008

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Bascom	Kiger	EP	Pre-meeting
2.			MS	
3.			FT	
4.			GA	
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

The bill provides free admission for active duty military personnel, their spouses, and their families to all state parks on the Memorial Day Holiday, and free admission for all visitors to state parks on the Veterans Day Holiday. It also encourages the Division of State Parks (division) in the Department of Environmental Protection (department) to hold special events or take appropriate actions to show appreciation for those who served in the United States military.

This bill amends section 258.104, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Florida's state park system is one of the largest in the country with 161 parks spanning more than 700,000 acres and 100 miles of sandy white beach.¹ In 2006-2007, approximately 19.5 million people visited Florida's state parks. State park revenues during the 2006-2007 fiscal year were approximately \$42 million and the annual operating and capital budgets totaled around \$77 million. In order to cover the annual budgetary shortfalls encountered by state parks, funds are transferred from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Approximately \$35 million has been transferred to cover last year's budget.²

Entrance and admission fees to state parks may be charged in a variety of ways. Fees may be charged to individuals (\$2 for vehicle entrance or \$1 for pedestrians or bicyclists) or per carload of up to eight people (\$4). The amount of the fee charged is based on which park visitors are

¹ <http://dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/parks.htm>

² Information provided by the Department of Environmental Protection staff analysis.

entering. The average admission fee is about \$2. Individuals may purchase an annual pass for \$43.40 (sales tax included), and families may purchase an annual pass for \$85.60 (sales tax included). 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 of operations or facilities and 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. Active Florida National Guard members, their spouse, or minor child receive one-half off admission fees to all state parks.³

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1: The bill would allow free entry into all state parks for active duty military personnel, their spouses, and family on the Memorial Day holiday. Additionally, all persons would be granted free admission to all state parks on the Veterans Day holiday in honor of persons serving in the United State military. The division is encouraged to hold special events or take appropriate actions to show appreciation for those persons that have served in the military.

Section 2: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2008.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The bill does not require cities or counties to expend funds or limit their authority to raise revenues or receive state-shared revenues as specified by s. 18, Art. VII, of the State Constitution..

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

The bill waives the fees for active duty military personnel, their spouses and families for state park admission on the Memorial Day holiday. The bill also waives state park admission fees for all visitors to all state parks on the Veterans Day holiday.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Active duty military personnel and their families would receive free admission to all state parks on the Memorial Day holiday. All persons would receive free admission to all state

³ <http://www.floridastateparks.org/information/fees.cfm>

parks on the Veterans Day holiday. This could provide a savings of \$1 to \$2 per person or up to \$8 for a family of four on the select days.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The department has indicated there would be a negative fiscal impact of approximately \$43,000 to state park revenues based on free admission for the two holidays. The division would also likely see some additional costs for advertising and promoting the events. There would also likely be additional costs for special events provided by the division, however those are unknown at this time.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

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

None.

B. Amendments:

None.