

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to the Family Readiness Program; amending  
 3           s. 250.5206, F.S.; expanding purpose, eligibility, and  
 4           annual report provisions of the Family Readiness Program  
 5           within the Department of Military Affairs; providing an  
 6           effective date.

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

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 10           Section 1.   Section 250.5206, Florida Statutes, is amended  
 11           to read:

12           250.5206   Family Readiness Program.--The Department of  
 13           Military Affairs shall establish the ~~a state~~ Family Readiness  
 14           Program headed by a program director and based on the United  
 15           States Department of Defense National Guard and Reserve Family  
 16           Readiness Strategic Plan 2004-2005 initiative.

17           (1)   PROGRAM PURPOSE.--The purpose of the program is ~~shall~~  
 18           ~~be~~ to provide need-based financial assistance to eligible  
 19           ~~families of~~ servicemembers of the Florida National Guard and  
 20           United States Reserve Forces, including the Coast Guard  
 21           Reserves, who are on active duty serving in the Global War on  
 22           Terrorism and who are federally deployed or participating in  
 23           state operations for homeland defense, and eligible families of  
 24           such servicemembers.

25           (2)   FUNDING.--Implementation of the program is subject to  
 26           appropriations expressly provided for this purpose.

27           (3)   ELIGIBLE SERVICES.--Program funds may be used in  
 28           emergency situations to purchase critically needed services,

29 including, but not limited to, reasonable living expenses,  
 30 housing, vehicles, equipment or renovations necessary to meet  
 31 disability needs, and health care.

32 (4) ELIGIBILITY.--

33 (a) The following persons are eligible to receive  
 34 financial assistance from the Family Readiness Program:

35 1. Florida residents who are members of the Florida  
 36 National Guard and United States Reserve Forces, including the  
 37 Coast Guard Reserves, who are on active duty serving in the  
 38 Global War on Terrorism and who are federally deployed or  
 39 participating in state operations for homeland defense; and

40 2. Florida residents who are designated as beneficiaries  
 41 on the United States Department of Defense Form 93, or who are  
 42 otherwise dependents, of a servicemember eligible under  
 43 subparagraph 1. and who are family members of such  
 44 servicemember.

45 (b) An eligible person may request financial assistance  
 46 from the Family Readiness Program for 120 days following  
 47 termination of the eligible servicemember's military orders for  
 48 qualifying service and return to home of record. Eligible  
 49 ~~recipients shall include persons designated as beneficiaries on~~  
 50 ~~the United States Department of Defense Form 93, or who are~~  
 51 ~~otherwise dependents of eligible servicemembers, and who are~~  
 52 ~~residents of the State of Florida. The period of eligibility to~~  
 53 ~~request assistance from the fund continues for 120 days~~  
 54 ~~following termination of the service member's military orders~~  
 55 ~~for qualifying service and return to home of record.~~

56 (5) REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE; REVIEW; AWARDS.--Requests for

57 assistance shall be validated and assessed at the local level by  
58 a federal Family Center Support Specialist stationed at a state  
59 armory or at a reserve facility by a designated official.  
60 Recommendations subsequent to assessment and validation shall be  
61 forwarded to the program director, who shall review the  
62 recommendations for eligibility, appropriateness, and  
63 sufficiency of documentation. The Adjutant General or his or her  
64 designee shall receive the recommendations from the program  
65 director and is authorized to award funds pursuant to  
66 subsections (3) and (4).

67 (6) AUDITS.--The inspector general of the department shall  
68 conduct a semiannual review and an annual audit of the program.

69 (7) ANNUAL REPORT.-- The department shall maintain  
70 sufficient data to provide an annual report to the Governor and  
71 the Legislature on the servicemembers and families served under  
72 the program, the types of services provided, and the allocation  
73 of funds spent.

74 (8) RULES.--The department is authorized to adopt rules  
75 necessary to implement this program, including procedures for  
76 applying for assistance, qualifying services, and criteria for  
77 eligibility.

78 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.