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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
03/18/2009	.	
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The Committee on Military Affairs and Domestic Security (Deutch) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete everything after the enacting clause
and insert:

Section 1. Veterans' Appreciation Week.—

(1) Each school district shall observe November 11 of each year as Veterans' Day and shall observe that week as Veterans' Appreciation Week. In any year in which November 11 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Veterans' Appreciation Week shall be observed the week immediately preceding or following November



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12 11, to coincide with the date that Veterans' Day is observed as
13 a federal holiday.

14 (2) During Veterans' Appreciation Week, the district shall
15 provide programs that instruct students on the role of veterans
16 in the history of our state and country and shall recognize the
17 contributions made by veterans to our state and country.

18 Section 2. Veterans' suicide prevention pilot projects.-

19 (1) PURPOSE.-The Department of Children and Family
20 Services, subject to the availability of public or private
21 funding, shall establish up to three pilot projects in the three
22 areas of the state which have the largest concentration of
23 veteran residents. The purpose of the projects is to reduce the
24 incidence of suicide by increasing access to services and
25 supports for veterans and their families who may be in need of
26 mental health services and who are not currently being served by
27 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

28 (2) DEPARTMENT DUTIES.-The department shall work with the
29 Florida Certification Board to develop a new veteran-peer-
30 specialist credential and develop a statewide certification
31 process for certifying veteran peer specialists through the
32 Florida Certification Board in order to create a cadre of
33 certified specialists to assist in providing peer support for
34 veterans through the pilot projects.

35 (3) PILOT PROJECTS.-Each pilot project must:

36 (a) Provide outreach in order to engage and educate
37 veterans, their families, and the community in order to increase
38 information on an access to services for veterans who are at
39 risk of suicide. Outreach activities include linkage with
40 service resources, dissemination of information, and education



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41 to:

42 1. Increase public awareness about the unique needs of
43 veterans and the risks of suicide and warning signs of suicide
44 in veterans, without creating additional stigma.

45 2. Coordinate and train professionals who provide services
46 for at-risk veterans.

47 3. Identify available services and specialized assistance
48 for veterans and family members.

49 4. Provide education on veterans' issues and trauma.

50 5. Mobilize a recovery-oriented system of care within the
51 community for at-risk veterans.

52 (b) Develop a veteran-to-veteran peer support program that
53 reaches out to veterans on a continual basis by mail, e-mail,
54 telephone, or face-to-face contact in order to:

55 1. Reduce isolation and the risk of suicide through regular
56 and ongoing, long-term contact;

57 2. Conduct informal assessments to determine if a referral
58 is needed;

59 3. Assist in connecting veterans to local resources; and

60 (c) Conduct a needs assessment of local substance abuse and
61 mental health providers in the pilot project area to determine
62 if local providers are trained and able to meet the specific
63 needs of veterans and the increase in demand for services.

64 (d) Work with community emergency response resources to
65 more effectively address crisis involving veterans and their
66 families. This includes linking emergency responders to
67 veterans' resources and persons trained in veterans' issues.
68 Regular pilot staff shall be trained on dealing with emergency
69 referrals, including training in being able to differentiate



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70 between the need for face-to-face intervention or phone
71 intervention. All staff shall be made aware of the necessity for
72 immediate documentation of all contacts inclusive of intentional
73 self-injurious behavior, statements of threat, written forms of
74 threat, extreme withdrawal, significant loss of appetite or
75 weight, and crisis warning signs unique to veterans. All
76 referrals in the areas served by the pilot projects must be
77 followed up with telephone contact and field-based intervention
78 services, if agreed to by the veteran or family member.

79 (e) Offer postdeployment reintegration sessions for
80 veterans who were deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom or
81 Operation Enduring Freedom through community providers at 4, 6,
82 and 10 months after returning home to complement the
83 reintegration efforts that the United States Department of
84 Defense oversees. Because symptoms of stress and warning signs
85 are often delayed, continual contact over time is important. The
86 timing protocol for reintegration sessions may vary for each
87 pilot project in order to evaluate the effectiveness of
88 different models.

89 (f) Establish a veterans information program at each pilot
90 project site to serve as a resource for student veterans and
91 college and university personnel serving student veterans. The
92 program must provide prevention education, as well as early
93 intervention and counseling, and assist student veterans who
94 have personal problems. The key components of the program
95 include:

96 1. A faculty-training component under which project
97 personnel work with a faculty coordinator from each of the
98 colleges and universities in the pilot project area to provide



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99 training on the symptoms and warning signs of suicide to faculty
100 members. The training must focus on the special circumstances
101 that are unique to this population, such as posttraumatic stress
102 disorder, traumatic brain injuries, and issues specific to
103 female veterans.

104 2. A component that disseminates information and provides
105 education for student veterans. The program must hold regular
106 educational workshops for student veterans related to veterans
107 issues and stresses that are experienced in an academic setting.
108 Printed literature that is specific to veterans shall be
109 disseminated regularly.

110 3. A component for responding to critical incidents, such
111 as traumatic death or medical crisis, campus violence, or other
112 incidents that may have a significant emotional impact on
113 student veterans. This includes providing trained debriefing
114 counselors, as well as group counseling for affected student
115 veterans and consultation services related to crisis management
116 and veterans.

117 (4) OTHER AGENCIES.—The Statewide Office of Suicide
118 Prevention, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Florida
119 National Guard shall enter into partnerships with the pilot
120 projects and community providers in order to implement this
121 initiative.

122 (5) EVALUATION.—The department, together with input from
123 each of the pilot projects, shall design an evaluation
124 methodology for measuring the efficacy of the pilot projects.
125 The evaluation shall be presented to the Governor, the President
126 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives
127 by March 1, 2012. The evaluation must consider whether the pilot



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128 projects have:

129 (a) Improved veteran access to community linkages and
130 resources, including primary care, behavioral health care
131 providers, and veterans' services, in order to provide needed
132 services and to help veterans be self-sufficient members of the
133 community.

134 (b) Educated, increased awareness of, and mobilized the
135 community about suicide as a public health problem, especially
136 as it relates to veterans.

137 (c) Reduced the danger and incidence of suicide and self-
138 harm among veterans.

139 (d) Increased the likelihood of long-term community
140 commitment to providing veterans' support.

141 (8) EXPIRATION.—The pilot projects shall expire July 1,
142 2012.

143 Section 3. Veterans' suicide prevention direct-support
144 organization.—The Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention may
145 establish a direct-support organization to assist with securing
146 funding for veterans' suicide prevention and other suicide
147 prevention initiatives, including any pilot projects established
148 by the Department of Children and Family Services to reduce the
149 incidence of suicide among veterans.

150 (1) The direct-support organization must be:

151 (a) A not-for-profit Florida corporation, incorporated
152 under chapter 617, Florida Statutes, and approved by the
153 Secretary of State.

154 (b) Organized and operated exclusively to solicit funds;
155 request and receive grants, gifts, and bequests of money;
156 acquire, receive, hold, invest, and administer property and



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157 funds in its own name; and make expenditures for the benefit of
158 the purposes specified by this section.

159 (c) Certified by the office, after review, to be operating
160 in a manner consistent with the goals of this section and in the
161 best interests of the state. Such certification must be made
162 annually and reported to the Office of Drug Control.

163 (2) The direct-support organization shall be governed by a
164 seven-member board of directors. The members of the board shall
165 be appointed by the office, shall serve at the pleasure of the
166 office, and be appointed to terms that may not exceed 4 years.

167 (3) The direct-support organization shall operate under
168 written contract with the office. The contract must provide for:

169 (a) Approval of the articles of incorporation and bylaws of
170 the direct-support organization by the office.

171 (b) The fiscal year of the direct-support organization to
172 begin July 1 of each year and end June 30 of the following year.

173 (c) Submission of an annual budget for the approval of the
174 office.

175 (d) Any procedures or conditions with which the direct-
176 support organization must comply to use property, facilities, or
177 personnel services of the office and to meet the administrative
178 requirements of the office.

179 (e) The disclosure of the material provisions of the
180 contract and the distinction between the Office for Suicide
181 Prevention and the direct-support organization to donors of
182 gifts, contributions, or bequests, as well as on all promotional
183 and fundraising publications.

184 (f) The reversion to the office or the state of moneys and
185 property held in trust by the direct-support organization if the



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186 direct-support organization is no longer approved to operate or
187 ceases to exist.

188 (4) The office may authorize the use of its facilities and
189 property, other than money, to the direct-support organization
190 as well as personnel services. The term "personnel services"
191 includes full-time personnel and part-time personnel as well as
192 payroll processing.

193 (5) Moneys of the direct-support organization shall be held
194 in a separate depository account in the name of the direct-
195 support organization and subject to the provisions of the
196 contract with the office. Such moneys may include membership
197 fees, private donations, income derived from fundraising
198 activities, and grants applied for and received by the direct-
199 support organization.

200 (6) The direct-support organization is subject to an annual
201 financial audit in accordance with s. 215.981, Florida Statutes.

202 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009.

203
204 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

205 And the title is amended as follows:

206 Delete everything before the enacting clause
207 and insert:

208 A bill to be entitled
209 An act relating to veterans; requiring school districts to
210 observe Veterans' Day and Veterans' Appreciation Week; providing
211 requirements for such recognition; directing the Department of
212 Children and Family Services to establish up to three pilot
213 projects for the purpose of reducing suicide among veterans and
214 increasing access to services; providing duties of the



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215 department; providing requirements for the pilot project
216 programs; requiring the Statewide Office of Suicide Prevention,
217 the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Florida National
218 Guard to enter into partnerships with the pilot projects and
219 community providers to implement the initiative; requiring an
220 evaluation and a report to the Governor and Legislature;
221 providing for expiration of the pilot projects; establishing a
222 veterans' suicide prevention direct-support organization
223 answerable to the Statewide Office for Suicide Prevention to
224 assist with funding veterans' suicide prevention initiatives;
225 providing corporate requirements; providing for a board of
226 directors; providing for a contract with the office and
227 requirements for the contract; authorizing the organization to
228 use the property, facilities, and personnel services of the
229 office; requiring the moneys of the organization to be deposited
230 in a separate account in the name of the organization; providing
231 an effective date.