

By Senator Garcia

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to small business financial
3 assistance; creating s. 288.066, F.S.; creating the
4 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program
5 within the Department of Economic Opportunity;
6 defining the term "small business"; authorizing the
7 department to accept and administer moneys
8 appropriated for such grants; specifying grant
9 amounts; limiting the amount that a small business may
10 receive under the program; requiring a small business
11 to apply to and enter into an agreement with the
12 department to receive grants; providing requirements
13 for participation in the program; providing that a
14 small business may not receive an additional award for
15 hiring a veteran previously claimed as an employee for
16 purposes of obtaining funds under the program;
17 authorizing the department to award an additional
18 grant to a small business under specified
19 circumstances; requiring the department to notify the
20 appropriate regional small business center of a small
21 business' participation; authorizing the department to
22 adopt rules; providing an appropriation; providing an
23 effective date.

24
25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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27 Section 1. Section 288.066, Florida Statutes, is created to
28 read:

29 288.066 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.-

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30 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created
31 within the department. The purpose of the program is to
32 stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing grants
33 to small businesses that hire and employ honorably discharged
34 veterans or disabled veterans with a service-connected
35 disability.

36 (1) As used in this section, the term "small business"
37 means an independently owned and operated, for-profit, and
38 privately held business that employs 200 or fewer persons;
39 generates \$2 million or less in annual revenue; and has
40 maintained its principal place of business in this state for at
41 least the previous 4 calendar years.

42 (2) The department may accept and administer moneys
43 appropriated to the department for providing grants to encourage
44 small businesses in this state to hire and employ veterans.

45 (3) A small business that hires a veteran as an employee
46 may receive a one-time grant of:

47 (a) \$3,000 for each veteran, as defined in s. 1.01(14).

48 (b) \$5,000 for each disabled veteran, as described in s.
49 295.07(1)(a)1.

50 (c) \$1,000 for each qualifying veteran whose employment is
51 continued beyond an initial 12-month period.

52 (4) The grants awarded to a small business under paragraphs
53 (3)(a) and (b) may not exceed \$25,000 per fiscal year.

54 (5) A small business must apply to and enter into an
55 agreement with the department in order to participate in the
56 program. The agreement must require that the small business:

57 (a) Reimburse the department for any awarded grant moneys
58 if the qualifying veteran does not remain employed with the

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59 small business for at least 1 year following an award.

60 (b) Upon the request of the department, report information
61 regarding the employment status of each qualifying veteran.

62 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least
63 80 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this
64 state based on the most recent federal census or the most recent
65 American Community Survey 5-year estimates published by the
66 United States Census Bureau.

67 (d) Reinvest any awarded grant moneys in the small business
68 to facilitate further job creation.

69 (e) Not receive an additional award for hiring a veteran
70 previously claimed as an employee for purposes of obtaining
71 funds under the program.

72 (6) The department may award the small business an
73 additional one-time grant of \$1,000 for each qualifying veteran
74 if it used the services of a regional workforce board in hiring
75 the veteran.

76 (7) The department shall notify the regional small business
77 center serving the county in which a participating small
78 business is located of a small business' participation in the
79 grant program in order to facilitate improved access to the
80 resources of the Florida Small Business Development Center
81 Network.

82 (8) The department may adopt rules to implement and
83 administer this section, including, but not limited to, rules
84 specifying requirements for the application and approval process
85 and the documentation necessary to claim grant moneys awarded
86 under this section.

87 Section 2. For the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the sum of \$10

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88 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
89 appropriated to the Department of Economic Opportunity to
90 implement and administer this act. The department may award
91 grant moneys up to a maximum of \$800,000 per fiscal year. Upon
92 termination of the program, all remaining appropriated funds
93 shall revert to the General Revenue Fund.

94 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.