

By the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

583-03205-15

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to military and veteran support;
3 amending s. 288.980, F.S.; removing the requirement
4 that an applicant to the Defense Infrastructure Grant
5 Program provide matching funds of a certain amount;
6 amending s. 292.10, F.S.; revising the categories of
7 veterans eligible to receive assistance from local
8 governing bodies; amending s. 455.213, F.S.; requiring
9 the Department of Business and Professional Regulation
10 to waive initial professional licensing fees for a
11 veteran who has received a general discharge under
12 honorable conditions; requiring the Department of
13 Veterans' Affairs to create, in consultation with the
14 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, a
15 section in the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide on
16 agricultural farming opportunities for veterans;
17 prescribing requirements; requiring the Department of
18 Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Department
19 of Military Affairs to create a pilot program for
20 commercial driver license testing for qualified
21 members of the Florida National Guard by a specified
22 date; requiring that such testing be conducted at
23 certain locations; providing for funding; providing an
24 effective date.

25
26 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
27

28 Section 1. Paragraph (c) of subsection (3) and subsection
29 (4) of section 288.980, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

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30 288.980 Military base retention; legislative intent; grants
31 program.—

32 (3)

33 (c) The department shall require that an applicant:

34 1. Represent a local government with a military
35 installation or military installations that could be adversely
36 affected by federal actions.

37 ~~2. Agree to match at least 30 percent of any grant awarded.~~

38 2.3. Prepare a coordinated program or plan of action
39 delineating how the eligible project will be administered and
40 accomplished.

41 3.4. Provide documentation describing the potential for
42 changes to the mission of a military installation located in the
43 applicant's community and the potential impacts such changes
44 will have on the applicant's community.

45 (4) The Florida Defense Reinvestment Grant Program is
46 established to respond to the need for this state to work in
47 conjunction with defense-dependent communities in developing and
48 implementing strategies and approaches that will help
49 communities support the missions of military installations, and
50 in developing and implementing alternative economic
51 diversification strategies to transition from a defense economy
52 to a nondefense economy. Eligible applicants include defense-
53 dependent counties and cities, and local economic development
54 councils located within such communities. The program shall be
55 administered by the department and grant awards may be provided
56 to support community-based activities that:

57 (a) Protect existing military installations;

58 (b) Diversify the economy of a defense-dependent community;

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59 or

60 (c) Develop plans for the reuse of closed or realigned
61 military installations, including any plans necessary for
62 infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate reuse and
63 related marketing activities.

64

65 Applications for grants under this subsection must include a
66 coordinated program of work or plan of action delineating how
67 the eligible project will be administered and accomplished,
68 which must include a plan for ensuring close cooperation between
69 civilian and military authorities in the conduct of the funded
70 activities and a plan for public involvement. An applicant must
71 agree to match at least 30 percent of any grant awarded.

72 Section 2. Section 292.10, Florida Statutes, is amended to
73 read:

74 292.10 Local governing bodies authorized to assist war
75 veterans; powers.—The board of county commissioners of each
76 county and the governing body of each city in the state are
77 authorized ~~hereby granted full and complete power and authority~~
78 to aid and assist wherever practical and feasible the veterans,
79 male and female, who have served in the Armed Forces of the
80 United States in any war, ~~and~~ and received an honorable discharge,
81 or received a general discharge under honorable conditions from
82 any branch of the military service of the United States, and
83 their dependents, in presenting claims for and securing such
84 compensation, hospitalization, education, loans, career
85 training, and other benefits or privileges to which said
86 veterans, or any of them, are or may become entitled under any
87 federal or state law or regulation by reason of their service in

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88 the Armed Forces of the United States.

89 Section 3. Subsection (12) of section 455.213, Florida
90 Statutes, is amended to read:

91 455.213 General licensing provisions.—

92 (12) The department shall waive the initial licensing fee,
93 the initial application fee, and the initial unlicensed activity
94 fee for a military veteran or his or her spouse at the time of
95 discharge, if he or she applies to the department for a license,
96 in a format prescribed by the department, within 60 months after
97 the veteran is discharged from any branch of the United States
98 Armed Forces. To qualify for this waiver, the veteran must have
99 been honorably discharged or received a general discharge under
100 honorable conditions.

101 Section 4. Agricultural farming opportunities for
102 veterans.—

103 (1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs, through the
104 direct-support organization established under s. 292.055,
105 Florida Statutes, and in consultation with the Department of
106 Agriculture and Consumer Services, shall include a section in
107 the Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide on agricultural farming
108 opportunities in this state for veterans of the Armed Forces of
109 the United States. The section must, at a minimum, include
110 information on:

111 (a) Federal, state, and local agricultural farming
112 programs, incentives, assistance, and grants that are available
113 to veterans.

114 (b) Federal and state agricultural farming outreach and
115 advocacy programs that are available to veterans.

116 (2) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall:

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117 (a) Make the guides available to all military installations
118 in this state.

119 (b) Provide a concise description of the contents of the
120 section and a link to the section on its website.

121 Section 5. No later than June 30, 2016, the Department of
122 Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Department of Military
123 Affairs shall jointly create a pilot program to provide
124 opportunities for commercial driver license testing to qualified
125 members of the Florida National Guard through the commercial
126 driver license skills test waiver available under s. 322.12,
127 Florida Statutes. Testing held pursuant to the pilot program
128 must be conducted at a Florida National Guard armory, an Armed
129 Forces Reserve Center, or the Camp Blanding Joint Training
130 Center. The pilot program must be administered using existing
131 funds appropriated to each department.

132 Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.