

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 per fiscal year under the program; requiring a  
11          small business to apply to and enter into an agreement  
12          with the department to receive grants; providing  
13          requirements for participation in the program;  
14          providing that a small business may not receive an  
15          additional award for hiring a qualifying veteran  
16          previously claimed as an employee for purposes of  
17          obtaining funds under the program; authorizing the  
18          department to award an additional one-time grant to a  
19          small business under specified circumstances;  
20          requiring the department to notify the appropriate  
21          regional small business center of a small business'  
22          participation in the program; authorizing the  
23          department to adopt rules; providing an appropriation;  
24          providing an effective date.

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

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

30 288.066 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.—  
 31 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created  
 32 within the department. The purpose of the program is to  
 33 stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing grants  
 34 to small businesses that hire and employ honorably discharged  
 35 veterans or disabled veterans with a service-connected  
 36 disability.

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

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

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

49 (a) Three thousand dollars for each veteran, as defined in  
 50 s. 1.01(14).

51 (b) Five thousand dollars for each disabled veteran, as  
 52 described in s. 295.07(1)(a)1.

53 (c) One thousand dollars for each qualifying veteran whose  
54 employment is continued beyond an initial 12-month period.

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

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

61 (a) Reimburse the department for any awarded grant moneys  
62 if the qualifying veteran does not remain employed with the  
63 small business for at least 1 year following an award.

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

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

71 (d) Reinvest any awarded grant moneys in the small  
72 business to facilitate further job creation. Reinvestments under  
73 this paragraph are limited to manufacturing, equipment, and  
74 facilities expenditures, or other operating or fixed capital  
75 outlay projects.

76 (e) Not receive an additional award for hiring a  
77 qualifying veteran previously claimed as an employee for  
78 purposes of obtaining funds under the program.

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

83       (7) The department shall notify the regional small  
84 business center serving the county in which a participating  
85 small business is located of a small business' participation in  
86 the grant program in order to facilitate improved access to the  
87 resources of the Florida Small Business Development Center  
88 Network.

89       (8) The department may adopt rules to implement and  
90 administer this section, including, but not limited to, rules  
91 specifying requirements for the application and approval process  
92 and the documentation necessary to claim grant moneys awarded  
93 under this section.

94       Section 2. For the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the sum of \$10  
95 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
96 appropriated to the Department of Economic Opportunity to  
97 implement and administer this act. The department may award  
98 grant moneys up to a maximum of \$800,000 per fiscal year. Upon  
99 termination of the program, all remaining appropriated funds  
100 shall revert to the General Revenue Fund.

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