

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. 295.24, F.S.; creating the
4 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program
5 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs; directing
6 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to administer the
7 program; defining terms; authorizing the corporation
8 to accept and administer moneys appropriated for such
9 grants; specifying grant amounts; limiting the amount
10 that a small business may receive under the program;
11 requiring a small business to apply to and enter into
12 an agreement with the corporation to receive grants;
13 prescribing minimum criteria for such agreements;
14 requiring the corporation to notify the appropriate
15 regional small business development center of a small
16 business' participation; providing for termination of
17 the program; authorizing the department to adopt
18 rules; providing an appropriation; providing effective
19 dates.

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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23 Section 1. Section 295.24, Florida Statutes, is created to
24 read:

25 295.24 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.—
26 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created
27 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to be administered by
28 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. The purpose of the program is to
29 stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing grants

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30 to small businesses that hire and employ honorably discharged
31 veterans or disabled veterans with service-connected
32 disabilities.

33 (1) As used in this section, the term:

34 (a) "Corporation" means Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.

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

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

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

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

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

50 (4) The grants awarded to a participating small business
51 under subsection (3) may not exceed \$25,000 per fiscal year.

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

55 (a) Employ a qualifying veteran for at least 1 year in
56 order to become eligible for grants awarded under subsection

57 (3).

58 (b) Upon the request of the corporation, report information

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59 regarding the employment status of each qualifying veteran.

60 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least
61 80 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this
62 state, based on the most recent federal census or the most
63 recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates published by
64 the United States Census Bureau.

65 (d) Invest any awarded grant moneys in the small business
66 to facilitate further job creation and employment of veterans.
67 Expenditures allowed under this subsection are limited to
68 manufacturing, equipment, and facilities expenses or other
69 operating costs or fixed capital outlay projects.

70 (e) Not receive an additional grant for rehiring a veteran
71 previously claimed as an employee by the same small business for
72 purposes of obtaining funds under the program.

73 (f) Is eligible to receive a grant award only for a veteran
74 initially hired on or after October 1, 2016.

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

81 (7) The grant program terminates on the date that all funds
82 appropriated for the program are expended or on October 1, 2026,
83 whichever occurs first.

84 (8) The Department of Veterans' Affairs may adopt rules to
85 implement and administer this section, including, but not
86 limited to, rules specifying requirements for the application
87 and approval process and the documentation necessary to claim

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88 grant moneys awarded under this section.

89 Section 2. Effective July 1, 2016, for the 2016-2017 fiscal
90 year, the sum of \$10 million in nonrecurring funds from the
91 General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of
92 Veterans' Affairs for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.,
93 to implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small
94 Business Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys
95 up to a maximum of \$900,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may
96 spend up to \$100,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the
97 department for staffing and administrative costs associated with
98 implementation and administration of the program. If any
99 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,
100 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the
101 Department of Veterans' Affairs to revert to the General Revenue
102 Fund.

103 Section 3. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this
104 act and except for this section, which shall take effect July 1,
105 2016, this act shall take effect October 1, 2016.