

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

583-02404-17

2017152c1

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to small business financial
3 assistance; creating s. 295.231, F.S.; creating the
4 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program
5 within the Department of Economic Opportunity;
6 directing Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to administer
7 the program; defining terms; authorizing the
8 corporation to accept and administer moneys
9 appropriated for such grants; specifying grant
10 amounts; limiting the amount that a small business may
11 receive under the program; requiring a small business
12 to apply to and enter into an agreement with the
13 corporation to receive grants; prescribing minimum
14 criteria for such agreements; requiring the
15 corporation to notify the appropriate regional small
16 business development center of a small business'
17 participation; authorizing the department to adopt
18 rules; prescribing reporting requirements; providing
19 for termination of the program; providing
20 appropriations; providing an effective date.

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

23
24 Section 1. Section 295.231, Florida Statutes, is created to
25 read:

26 295.231 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.-
27 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created
28 within the Department of Economic Opportunity to be administered
29 by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. The purpose of the program is

583-02404-17

2017152c1

30 to stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing
31 grants to small businesses that hire and employ honorably
32 discharged veterans or disabled veterans with service-connected
33 disabilities.

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

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

36 (b) "Small business" means an independently owned and
37 operated, for-profit, privately held business that employs 50 or
38 fewer persons; generates \$1 million or less in annual revenue;
39 and has maintained its principal place of business in this state
40 for at least the previous 4 calendar years.

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

45 (3) A small business that initially hires a veteran on or
46 after July 1, 2017, as an employee may receive a one-time grant
47 of:

48 (a) Fifteen hundred dollars per newly hired veteran, as
49 defined in s. 1.01(14).

50 (b) Three thousand dollars for each newly hired disabled
51 veteran, as that term is described in s. 295.07(1)(a).

52 (4) The total of grants awarded to a participating small
53 business under subsection (3) may not exceed \$10,500 per fiscal
54 year.

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

58 (a) Employ a qualifying veteran for at least 1 year before

583-02404-17

2017152c1

59 becoming eligible for a grant awarded under subsection (3).

60 (b) Report information regarding the employment status of
61 each qualifying veteran, if requested to do so by the
62 corporation.

63 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least
64 90 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this
65 state, based on the most recent federal census or the most
66 recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates published by
67 the United States Census Bureau.

68 (d) Use any awarded grant moneys to facilitate the small
69 business' creation of additional jobs for and employment of
70 veterans; however, grant moneys may be used only for
71 manufacturing, equipment, and facility expenses or other
72 operating costs or fixed capital outlay projects.

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

76 (f) Is eligible to receive a grant award only for a veteran
77 initially hired on or after July 1, 2017.

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

84 (7) The Department of Economic Opportunity may adopt rules
85 to 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

583-02404-17

2017152c1

88 grant moneys awarded under this section.

89 (8) By December 31, 2020, the corporation shall provide a
90 report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the
91 Speaker of the House of Representatives on the grant program's
92 progress and outcomes for the preceding 3 fiscal years. The
93 report must include aggregate information on the total number of
94 veterans and small businesses assisted by the program; an
95 accounting of how the corporation used the state funds it
96 received for the grant program; and a description of the nature
97 of the participation in the program by the Florida Small
98 Business Development Center Network. The report must also
99 contain specific information on the number of small businesses
100 receiving grant funds; the number of veterans employed by each
101 small business receiving grant funds; the salary paid to each
102 veteran employed; the period of time for which the small
103 business employed each veteran; the grant program's economic
104 benefit to the state; and all performance-based metrics and
105 methodologies used to calculate the grant program's economic
106 benefit to the state.

107 (9) The grant program terminates July 1, 2022.

108 Section 2. Beginning July 1, 2017, and for the 2017-2018
109 through the 2021-2022 fiscal years, the sum of \$500,000 in
110 nonrecurring funds from the State Economic Enhancement and
111 Development Trust Fund is appropriated to the Department of
112 Economic Opportunity for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans,
113 Inc., to contract with the Department of Economic Opportunity to
114 implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small Business
115 Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys up to a
116 maximum of \$500,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may spend

583-02404-17

2017152c1

117 up to \$25,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the
118 department for staffing and administrative costs associated with
119 implementation and administration of the program. If any
120 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,
121 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the
122 Department of Economic Opportunity for deposit in the State
123 Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund.

124 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.