

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: SB 1360

INTRODUCER: Senator Wright

SUBJECT: Governor's Medal of Freedom

DATE: January 24, 2022

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Caldwell</u>	<u>MS</u>	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 1360 saves from repeal the Governor's Medal of Freedom. The Governor's Medal of Freedom authorizes the Governor to present a medal of freedom to a person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to the state.

The bill replaces the term "citizens" with "residents."

The repealer date of July 1, 2022, is removed from statute.

II. Present Situation:

Governor's Medal of Freedom

The Governor's Medal of Freedom, enacted in the state in 2020¹, authorizes the Governor to present a medal to a person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to the citizens of the state, its culture, or other significant public or private endeavor.² The medal itself contains an inscription and a ribbon.³

If the Governor has selected a recipient who has died prior to being awarded the medal, the Governor may present the medal to a person otherwise designated.⁴

Authority for the Governor's Medal of Freedom is set to expire July 1, 2022. Florida is the only state to statutorily authorize a Governor's Medal of Freedom.

¹ Ch. 2020-114, Laws of Fla.

² Section 14.35, F.S.

³ Section 14.35(1), F.S.

⁴ Section 14.35(2)(a), F.S.

Previous Recipients of the Medal of Freedom

The Governor has previously twice awarded the Medal of Freedom. On April 7, 2021, the Governor awarded the inaugural Medal of Freedom to Bobby Bowden, long-time head football coach for the Florida State University.⁵ In support, the Governor cited not only Coach Bowden's formidable achievement in launching the Florida State University Seminoles into a top nationally-recognized football program, but also his positive and enduring influence on the student athletes.⁶ During the ceremony, the Governor proclaimed April 7, 2021, Bobby Bowden Day.⁷

On September 16, 2021, the Governor presented the Medal of Freedom to Felix Rodriguez, a former paramilitary officer in the CIA who served during the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and also as an Army Colonel during the conflict in Vietnam.⁸ At the presentation ceremony, the Governor noted, "Felix's life has been dedicated to fighting communism, to supporting freedom, to supporting liberty, and we appreciate Felix as a brave and courageous freedom fighter."⁹ In addition to awarding the Medal of Freedom, the Governor proclaimed September 16, 2021 Felix I. Rodriguez-Mendigutia Day.¹⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 1360 saves from repeal the Governor's Medal of Freedom, thereby enabling the Governor to award Medals of Freedom. The Governor may present a Medal of Freedom to a person who has made an especially meritorious contribution to the state.

The bill replaces the term "citizens" with "residents."

The repealer date of July 1, 2022, is removed from statute.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

⁵ The Florida Channel, *4/7/21 Ceremony to Honor Florida Medal of Freedom Recipient Bobby Bowden*, available at [4/7/21 Ceremony to Honor Florida Medal of Freedom Recipient Bobby Bowden - The Florida Channel](#)

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Executive Office of the Governor, *Press Release: Governor Ron DeSantis Awards Felix Rodriguez with Governor's Medal of Freedom*, Sept. 17, 2021, available at [Governor Ron DeSantis Awards Felix Rodríguez with Governor's Medal of Freedom \(flgov.com\)](#)

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

A fiscal impact is not expected; therefore, an appropriation is not needed.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 14.35 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.