

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 1043](#)

TITLE: Veterans

SPONSOR(S): Plakon

COMPANION BILL: [CS/SB 116](#) (Burgess)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Intergovernmental Affairs](#)

15 Y, 0 N



[State Affairs](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill:

- Reduces the maximum number of nominees the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council.
- Requires the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) to evaluate the extent to which veterans and their spouses and dependents are aware of programs and services and to make recommendations.
- Requires the FDVA to ensure coordination to the greatest extent possible with the United States Department of Defense to directly engage servicemembers reentering civilian life and authorizes the FDVA to engage county and city veteran service officers for assistance.
- Requires the FDVA to submit an evaluation of veterans' health literacy in this state.
- Requires the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program to include specialized mental health training to recognize indicators of elevated mental health conditions.
- Expands the duties of Florida is for Veterans, Inc., to include advising the FDVA on problems or needs of veterans and their spouses and dependents.
- Requires the FDVA to develop a statewide plan to establish adult day health care facilities across the state to serve veterans and their families.
- Authorizes a percentage of the proceeds from the sale of the Gadsden Flag specialty license plate be used for administrative costs.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs estimates the bill will result in approximately \$350,000 in additional state expenditures.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill:

- Reduces the maximum number of nominees the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council may transmit to the [Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs](#) (FDVA) for submission to the Governor and Cabinet for induction into the [Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame](#) from 20 to 5. (Section [1](#))
- Requires the FDVA to evaluate the extent to which veterans and their spouses and dependents are aware of programs and services and to also make recommendations on increasing such public awareness. (Section [2](#))
- Requires the FDVA to ensure coordination to the greatest extent possible with the United States Department of Defense to directly engage servicemembers reentering civilian life and authorizes the FDVA to engage county and city veteran service officers for assistance and to include information on this requirement in its annual report. (Section [2](#))
- Requires the FDVA to submit an evaluation of veterans' health literacy in this state as part of its 2025 annual report. (Section [2](#))

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- Requires the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program to include specialized mental health training to recognize indicators of elevated mental health conditions. (Section [3](#))
- Expands the duties of [Florida is for Veterans, Inc.](#), to include advising the FDVA on problems or needs of veterans and their spouses and dependents. (Section [5](#))
- Requires the FDVA to develop a statewide plan to establish adult day health care facilities across the state to serve veterans and their families. (Section [7](#))
- Authorizes that the percentage of the proceeds from the sale of the Gadsden Flag specialty license plate currently authorized to be used for promotion and marketing may also be used for administrative costs. (Section [8](#))

The bill also contains sections to correct cross-references and remove obsolete references. (Section [4](#) and [6](#))

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2025. (Section [9](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs estimates that expanding the scope of the survey of the needs of veterans and their spouses and dependents in the areas of social services, health care, education, and employment, and any other areas of determined need by evaluating the extent to which such persons are aware of existing federal, state, or community programs or services that meet their areas of need may require an additional \$50,000 in funding.¹

The Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs estimates that continuing to implement the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program, with specialized mental health training to recognize indicators of elevated mental health conditions, may require \$300,000 in recurring funding.²

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[Department of Veterans’ Affairs](#)

The FDVA is constitutionally chartered³ department that was created to provide assistance to all former, present, and future members of the Armed Forces of the United States and their spouses and dependents in preparing claims for and securing compensation, hospitalization, career training, and other benefits or privileges to which they are, or may become entitled to under federal or state law or regulation by reason of their service.⁴ FDVA operates a network of nine state veterans’ homes and provides statewide outreach to connect veterans with services, benefits, and support.⁵ FDVA offers benefits and services in the fields of health care, mental health and substance abuse, claims support, education, employment, housing, burial benefits, and legal assistance.⁶ There are about 1.4 million veterans living in Florida, making the state’s veteran population the third largest nationally.⁷ The FDVA is authorized to apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, federal government or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source, and may use funds derived from these sources to defray clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary for carrying out its duties.⁸

¹ Email from Roy Clark, Director of Cabinet and Legislative Affairs, Florida Dept. of Veterans’ Affairs, to Jay Howard, Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, Florida Senate (February 12, 2025) (on file with the House Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee).

² *Id.*

³ [Art. IV, s. 11, Fla. Const.](#)

⁴ S. [292.05\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁵ Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [Executive Director’s Message](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁶ Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [Benefits & Services](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁷ Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [Our Veterans](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁸ S. [292.05\(4\), F.S.](#)

The FDVA responsible for conducting an ongoing study on the problems and needs of veterans and their spouses and dependents who reside in Florida.⁹ The study must include a survey of:

- Existing state and federal programs available for resident veterans and their spouses and dependents that specify the extent to which the programs are being implemented, with recommendations for the improved implementation, extension, or improvement of the programs.
- The needs of resident veterans and their spouses and dependents in the areas of social services, health care, education, and employment, and any other areas of determined need, with recommendations regarding federal, state, and community services that would meet those needs.
- Federal, state, public, and private funds available that could be used to defray the costs of state or community services needed for resident veterans and their spouses and dependents.

The FDVA is required to submit a written report to the Governor, the Cabinet, and the Legislature annually that describes expenses incurred in veteran service work, cases handled by the FDVA and by county and city veteran service officers of the state, the amount of benefits obtained for veterans, and information regarding all certified veteran service officers.¹⁰ The report must also describe departmental actions taken by the FDVA and include other information and departmental recommendations as it relates to its duties and responsibilities. In addition, the report must also include the current status of the FDVA's domiciliary and nursing homes.¹¹

County and City Veteran Service Officers and Agency Claims Examiners

County and city veteran service officers are responsible for assisting veterans and their dependents in securing all entitled benefits earned through honorable military service and to advocating for veterans' interests in their community.¹² Each county or municipality may employ a veterans service officer.¹³ Each county or city veteran services officer must be a veteran or the surviving spouse of a veteran and have at least a two-year degree from an accredited higher educational institution or a high school degree and at least four years of administrative experience.

FDVA's claim examiners, set up to assist veterans with claims, are co-located with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office in Bay Pine, each VA Medical Center, and many VA Outpatient Clinics.¹⁴

The FDVA provides a training program for county and city veteran service officers.¹⁵ Every county or city veteran service officer must attend the training and successfully complete a test administered by the FDVA. The FDVA is required to further establish periodic training refresher courses, which must be completed as a condition of continued employment.¹⁶

Transition Assistance

The FDVA through Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) supports servicemembers with the transition into civilian life in many ways, including, but not limited to, engaging servicemembers through the SkillBridge program, hosting job fairs, and by briefing servicemembers while they are participating in the United States Armed Forces' Transition Assistance Programs.¹⁷ The SkillBridge program, under the U.S. Department of Defense, provides opportunities for a servicemember to participate in industry training programs as he or she prepares to transition back into his or her civilian life.¹⁸

⁹ S. [292.05\(5\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰ S. [292.05\(6\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹¹ S. [292.05\(6\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹² See Leon County Government, [Veterans Services](#), (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

¹³ S. [292.11\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴ Veteran Help Group, [Benefits and Services-Claims](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

¹⁵ S. [292.11\(4\), F.S.](#)

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ As established under 10 U.S.C. 1144, the SkillBridge program furnishes counseling, assistance in identifying employment and training opportunities, help in obtaining such employment and training, and other related information and services to members of the armed forces.

¹⁸ U.S. Dept of Defense, [DOD Skillbridge Program Brochure](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

Veteran's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Population and Mental Health

As of 2023, the VA reported that there were 19.1 million veterans living in the United States and of that, about 1,430,000 veterans resided in Florida.¹⁹ Of the Florida veterans:

- 1.1 million are wartime veterans;
- 330,000 are peacetime veterans;
- 11,000 are World War II veterans;
- 75,000 are Korean War veterans;
- 462,000 are Vietnam-era veterans; and
- 421,000 are Gulf War veterans, including post-9/11.²⁰

Veterans are known to have higher levels of mental distress than non-veterans. In a 2014 study, almost 1 in 4 veterans showed symptoms of mental illness.²¹ Predominant mental health diagnoses among veterans are:

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder at a rate of 15 times that of the general population;
- Depression at a rate of five times that of the general population; and
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).²²

Veterans who have a diagnosable mental health illness are at a much higher risk of suicide than veterans without mental illness. A 2017 study of Veterans Health Administration patients shows a more than double rate of suicide among veterans with a mental health or substance use disorder than among persons without these diagnoses.²³

An estimated 30,177 active duty servicemembers and veterans of the post-9/11 wars have died by suicide, significantly more than the 7,057 service members that died in the post-9/11 war operations.²⁴ Identified causes vary. As many as 20 percent of post-9/11 servicemembers have experienced a TBI, many of whom have been exposed to repetitive damage.²⁵

Federal Programs

In 2018, the VA implemented a 10-year strategy for preventing veteran suicide.²⁶ This approach to suicide prevention involves a veteran's family, peers, and community and it includes specific outreach to veterans who do not access services of the VA.²⁷

VA suicide prevention initiatives include:

- Enhancing mental health services for veterans who are women;
- Broadening telehealth;
- Developing free-of-charge mobile applications for veterans and their families;
- Improving access to mental health care; and
- Assisting families of veterans by telephone.²⁸

In implementing a suicide prevention strategy, the VA partners with other government agencies and organizations at both the national and local levels to share information and training on suicide prevention.²⁹ One of the ways the VA has addressed state-level suicide prevention is through the "Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among

¹⁹ Florida Dept. of Veterans' Affairs, [Fast Facts](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ National Institute on Mental Illness (NAMI), [Veterans & Active Duty-Mental Health Concerns](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

²² *Id.*

²³ The rate of suicide among Veterans Health Administration patients with mental health illness at the time of the study was 57 patients per 100,000. Rand Corporation, [Suicide Among Veterans/Veterans' Issues in Focus](#), (July 15, 2021) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

²⁴ Thomas Howard Suitt, III, Watson Institute, International & Public Affairs, Brown University, [High Suicide Rates among United States Service Members and Veterans of the Post-9/11 Wars](#), pp. 1,3 (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

²⁵ *Id.* at 3-4.

²⁶ U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, 2018-2028](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

Service Members, Veterans, and their Families,” the VA’s ongoing collaboration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.³⁰ The “Mayor’s Challenges to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families” is an analogous collaboration at the local level for communities across the nation.³¹ The goal of these initiatives is to expand and implement state-wide best practices for preventing and reducing suicide.³² All 50 states and five territories are involved in the Governor’s Challenge and 14 community are actively engaged in the Mayor’s Challenge.³³

State Programs

In 2021, the FDVA was authorized to establish the Florida Veterans’ Care Coordination (FVCC) Program.³⁴ To provide services, the FDVA may contract with a non-profit, accredited entity to provide dedicated behavioral health care referral services through the state’s 211 Network.³⁵ The FVCC program objectives are to prevent veteran suicide, increase veteran use of programs and services provided by the VA, and increase veteran usage of community-based programs and services.³⁶

The FDVA established the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot program to offer the FDVA’s claims examiner and each county and city veteran service officer specialized training and certification in the prevention of veteran suicide.³⁷ To provide training curriculum, the FDVA contracts with an organization established in developing and implementing veteran-relevant and evidence-based suicide prevention training.³⁸

Participants in the pilot program must receive training in recognizing signs of increased suicide risk and making emergency crisis referrals for veterans in emotional or psychological distress.³⁹ The FDVA is directed to adopt rules regarding the implementation of the pilot program.⁴⁰ The FDVA must also submit an annual report to the Legislature each year that includes information on the program and recommendations on whether changes should be made to increase the effectiveness of the pilot program.⁴¹ The FDVA will recommend whether the pilot program should be continued in its June 30, 2026 report.⁴²

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida) is a nonprofit corporation within the FDVA created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.⁴³ Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence. Additionally, Veterans Florida assists veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and encourages the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community, which lends to its mission of assisting veterans to fully transition to civilian life.⁴⁴

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

³⁰ U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Office of Suicide Prevention, [2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report, p. 34](#) (Dec. 2024) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

³¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Technical Assistance, [Governor’s and Mayor’s Challenges](#), (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Ch. [2021-198, Laws of Fla.](#); See also [s. 394.9087, F.S.](#)

³⁵ S. [394.9087\(1\), F.S.](#) The Florida 211 network, established in [s. 408.918, F.S.](#), operates as the single point of coordination for information and referral of health and human services (S. [408.918\(1\), F.S.](#)).

³⁶ S. [394.9087\(2\), F.S.](#)

³⁷ [Ch. 2022-39, Laws of Fla.](#) See also [s. 292.115, F.S.](#)

³⁸ S. [292.115\(2\), F.S.](#)

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ S. [292.115\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁴¹ S. [292.115\(4\), F.S.](#)

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ [S. 295.21\(1\)-\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁴ Guidestar, [Florida is for Veterans, Inc.](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025). See also [s. 295.21\(2\), F.S.](#)

Created within the FDVA, the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) program assists in connecting servicemembers, veterans, or their spouses in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers for employment.⁴⁵ The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields and to inspire the growth of veteran-owned small businesses.⁴⁶ Veterans Florida administers the VETS program and performs many functions including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts;
- Assisting individuals in the target market⁴⁷ who reside in or relocate to Florida and who seek employment with the target industry or secondary target industry business;⁴⁸
- Offering skills assessments and assisting in establishing employment goals;
- Assisting Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target market. Veterans Florida provides services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting them with suitable applicants for employment. Suitable applicants include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job skills or may need additional training to meet the specific needs of a business;
- Providing information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans;
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist individuals in the target market in meeting the workforce-skill needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program;
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target market in Florida, which connects business leaders in the state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs; and
- Administering a SkillBridge initiative for target industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state.⁴⁹

Under the VETS program, Veterans Florida may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.⁵⁰ Veterans Florida may collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives.⁵¹ One of the entities that Veterans Florida collaborates with is the Florida Department of Commerce and efforts of the now-defunct Florida Defense Support Task Force, which was replaced by a direct-support organization in 2024.⁵²

Veterans' Adult Day Health Care

Adult day care centers provide therapeutic services and activities for adults in a noninstitutional setting.⁵³ Participants may utilize a variety of services offered during any part of a day totaling less than 24 hours.⁵⁴ Basic services provided by adult day care centers include leisure activities, self-care training, nutritional services, and respite care.⁵⁵ These facilities are licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration.⁵⁶ However, facilities that

⁴⁵ [S. 295.22\(3\) and \(4\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁶ [S. 295.22\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁷ "Target market" is defined as servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried, [S. 295.22\(2\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁸ "Target industry business" means a corporate headquarters business or any business that is engaged in one of the target industries identified pursuant to criteria developed by the Department of Commerce where the headquarters or business will have future growth, stability, high wages, market and resource independence, contribute to the state or area's industry, and have positive economic impact, [Ss. 288.005\(7\) and 295.22\(2\)\(c\), F.S.](#) "Secondary industry business" is a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have directly transferable skills. Such businesses are in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service, [S. 295.22\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁹ [S. 295.22\(4\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁰ [S. 295.22\(5\), F.S.](#)

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² [Ch. 2024-234, Laws of Fla.](#)

⁵³ [S. 429.901\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁴ *Id.* and *See also* [s. 429.905\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁵ [S. 429.901\(1\) and \(3\), F.S.](#)

are operated by the federal government or any agency thereof are exempt from current state law on adult day care centers.⁵⁷

The VA Adult Day Health Care Program (Program) was established by the VA with the goal of allowing veterans to have a place during the day for social activities, peer support, companionship, and recreation.⁵⁸ The Program is intended for veterans who need help with activities of daily living, who are isolated, or whose caregiver is experiencing burden.⁵⁹ Health services such as care from nurses, therapists, social workers, and others may also be provided.⁶⁰ The Program may be provided at VA medical centers, state Veterans' Homes, or through community organizations.⁶¹ To receive a federal grant or grant funding for an adult day health care program, a state must meet the following specific federal requirements:

- If an adult day health care program is located within a nursing home, domiciliary, or other care facility, the adult health care program must have its own separate designated space during operational hours.
- The indoor space for the adult day health care program must be at least 100 sq. ft. per participant, including office space for staff and at least 60 sq. ft. per participant excluding office space for staff.
- Each program must design and partition its space to meet its own needs, but must make available certain federally mandated functional areas.⁶²
- Furnishings must be available for all participants, including functional furniture suitable to the participants' needs.⁶³

The FDVA operates nine State Veterans' Homes, which have 1,102 skilled nursing and assisted living beds and is in the process of adding a tenth home.⁶⁴ In 2023, the Legislature created the Veterans' Adult Day Health Care of Florida Act to provide for the establishment of basic standards for the operation of veterans' adult day health care programs for eligible veterans in need of such services.⁶⁵ However, the FDVA does not currently operate or manage any adult day health care facilities in the state.

The FDVA determines the eligibility of applicants for admission to the state program. The program is available to any veteran who meets the following requirements:

- In need of adult day health care;
- Be a resident of the state at the time of application;
- Not owe money to the FDVA for services rendered during a previous stay at a FDVA facility;
- Have applied for all financial assistance reasonably available through governmental resources; and
- Have been approved as eligible for care and treatment by the VA.⁶⁶

The director of FDVA may waive the residency requirement for a veteran who is a disaster evacuee of a state under a declared state of emergency and would otherwise qualify.⁶⁷ State law establishes the admission priority for eligible veterans.⁶⁸

Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame

Administered by the FDVA, the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame (FVHF) was established by the Legislature to honor military veterans who, through their works and lives during or after their military service, have made noteworthy

⁵⁶ S. [429.903, F.S.](#)

⁵⁷ S. [429.905, F.S.](#)

⁵⁸ U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [Adult Day Health Care](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² For the list of federally mandated functional areas, see 38 C.F.R. s. 59.160(c)(1)-(11).

⁶³ 38 C.F.R. s. 59.160.

⁶⁴ Florida Dept. of Veterans Affairs, [Governor DeSantis Signs Legislation to Support Florida Veterans and Their Families \(June 24, 2024\)](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁶⁵ [Ch. 2023-162, s. 3, Laws of Fla.](#)

⁶⁶ S. [296.47\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁷ S. [296.47\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁸ Section [296.47\(3\), F.S.](#), establishes an order of priority given to veterans for admittance into the program.

contributions to the state.⁶⁹ An inductee into the FVHF is commemorated with his or her name placed on a plaque that is displayed in a designated area of the State Capitol.⁷⁰ During the 2012 Legislative Session, the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council (Council) was created as an advisory council to oversee the FVHF.⁷¹ The Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Attorney General, the Chief Financial Officer, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and the executive director of the FDVA each appoint one member to the seven-member Council which is comprised of honorably discharged veterans.⁷²

The Council is directed to annually accept nominations and transmit up to 20 nominees to the FDVA for submission to the Governor and Cabinet, who then select the nominees to be inducted into the FVHF.⁷³ The Council gives preference to veterans born in Florida or who adopted Florida as their home state and who have made a significant contribution to the state in civic, business, public service, or other pursuits.⁷⁴ The Council is authorized to establish criteria and timeframes regarding the nominating process and induction ceremony.⁷⁵

The Council established the following criteria in order to be nominated a candidate must:

- Meet the definition of "Veteran" as defined by [s. 1.01, F.S.](#), as determined by the U.S. Department of Defense documentation, such as a DD Form 214, or proof of service from the Florida National Guard with a NGB Form 22.
- Have received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Armed Forces and can provide official documentation verifying discharge status.
- Have exhibited good moral character.⁷⁶

Additionally, posthumous nominations are accepted if the veteran's military service records are provided. If the veteran's DD Form 214 or NGB Form 22 is not available, then other documentation, including discharge papers, news articles, affidavits, official letters of service from a branch of service, the U.S. Department of Defense, or the Florida National Guard, or other documentation that can be verified may be accepted.⁷⁷ Employees of the Governor's staff, all elected or appointed officials in the State of Florida, members of County Veteran Service Offices, and members of the FDVA, its Foundation, and the Council are ineligible for induction until two years after they have left their position. The Council may recommend a waiver of the two-year requirement for nominees over the age of 70.⁷⁸

Gadsden Flag License Plates

There are over 100 specialty license plates in support of the causes they represent and 21 are in the presale process.⁷⁹ Specialty license plates are available to an owner or lessee of a motor vehicle who is willing to pay an annual use fee, ranging from \$15 to \$25, in addition to the required license taxes and service fees.⁸⁰ The annual use fees are distributed to an organization or organizations in support of a particular cause or charity signified on the plate's design and designated in statute.⁸¹

In order to establish a specialty license plate and after the plate is approved, the law requires the following actions within certain timelines:

- Within 60 days, the organization must submit an art design for the plate, in a medium prescribed by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV);

⁶⁹ Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, [Honoring Florida's Veterans](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁷⁰ S. [265.003\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

⁷¹ [Ch. 2012-159, s. 5, Laws of Fla.](#) See also [s. 265.003\(4\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁷² S. [265.003\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁷³ S. [265.003\(4\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁷⁴ S. [265.003\(4\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

⁷⁵ S. [265.003\(5\), F.S.](#)

⁷⁶ Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, [Nomination Process](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, [Personalized and Specialty License Plates](#) (last visited Feb. 28, 2025).

⁸⁰ S. [320.08056, F.S.](#)

⁸¹ S. [320.08058, F.S.](#)

- Within 120 days, the DHSMV must establish a method to issue presale vouchers for the specialty license plate; and
- Within 24 months after the presale vouchers are established, the organization must obtain a minimum of 3,000 voucher sales before manufacturing of the plate may begin.⁸²

If the minimum sales requirement has not been met by the end of the 24-month presale period, then the DHSMV will discontinue the plate and issuance of presale vouchers. Upon discontinuation, a purchaser of a presale voucher may use the annual use fee as a credit toward any other specialty license plate or apply for a refund with the DHSMV.⁸³

Organizations that collect annual use fees can only use the money they make in this state, unless the annual use fee comes from selling specialty plates for the U.S. Armed Forces and veterans.⁸⁴ In addition, organizations must adhere to certain accountability requirements, including an annual audit or attestation document affirming that funds received have been spent in accordance with applicable statutes.⁸⁵

The 2020 Legislature created the Gadsden Flag specialty license plate.⁸⁶ The license plate bears the DHSMV-approved colors and design. The word “Florida” appears at the top of the plate and “Don’t Tread on Me” appears at the bottom of the plate.⁸⁷

The annual use fees from the specialty license plate are to be distributed to the Florida Veterans Foundation, a direct-support organization of the FDVA and used to benefit veterans. Up to 10 percent of the proceeds may be used for continuing promotion and marketing of the plate.⁸⁸

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N	3/12/2025	Darden	Burgess
State Affairs Committee				

⁸² [Chapter 2022-189, Laws of Fla.](#), extended the presale by an additional 24 months for an approved specialty license plate organization that, as of June 15, 2022, is in the presale period but has not recorded 3,000 voucher sales.

⁸³ S. [320.08053\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

⁸⁴ S. [320.08056\(10\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁸⁵ S. [320.08062, F.S.](#)

⁸⁶ [Ch. 2020-181, Laws of Fla.](#)

⁸⁷ S. [320.08058\(92\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁸⁸ S. [320.08058\(92\)\(b\), F.S.](#)