

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to veterans; amending s. 265.003,
3 F.S.; revising the maximum number of nominees for the
4 Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame submitted by the
5 Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council to the
6 Department of Veterans' Affairs for submission to the
7 Governor and the Cabinet; amending s. 292.05, F.S.;
8 requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs to
9 conduct a study that includes a survey evaluating the
10 extent to which specified persons are aware of certain
11 existing programs or services; requiring that such
12 survey also include specified recommendations;
13 requiring that a certain report include additional
14 actions taken by the Department of Veterans' Affairs
15 and other information and recommendations as the
16 department determines are necessary; requiring that a
17 specified report include an evaluation of the health
18 literacy of veterans in this state and recommendations
19 on how to increase knowledge of programs and services
20 available to such veterans; requiring the department
21 to ensure coordination to the greatest extent possible
22 with the United States Department of Defense for a
23 specified purpose; authorizing the Department of
24 Veterans' Affairs to engage county and city veteran
25 service officers for assistance; amending s. 292.115,

26 F.S.; revising the purpose of the Veteran Suicide
27 Prevention Training Pilot Program to include
28 specialized mental health training; requiring
29 individuals electing to participate in the pilot
30 program to be trained to identify indicators of
31 elevated mental health risk; requiring the department
32 to contract with an organization developing and
33 implementing veteran-relevant and evidence-based
34 mental health training; amending s. 295.124, F.S.;
35 revising a reference to the United States Code;
36 amending s. 295.21, F.S.; requiring Florida Is For
37 Veterans, Inc., to advise the Department of Veterans'
38 Affairs on specified problems or needs of certain
39 military personnel and their spouses; amending s.
40 295.22, F.S.; revising the collaborators of the
41 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to
42 include a specified direct-support organization;
43 amending s. 296.43, F.S.; requiring the Department of
44 Veterans' Affairs to develop a plan to establish adult
45 day health care facilities across this state to serve
46 veterans and their families; requiring that such plans
47 include specified information; requiring the
48 department to provide a specified report to the
49 Legislature by a specified date; amending s.
50 320.08058, F.S.; authorizing the use of a specified

51 percentage of proceeds from the sale of a specified
 52 specialty license plate for the promotion and
 53 administrative costs of the plate; providing an
 54 effective date.

55
 56 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

57
 58 **Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of section**
 59 **265.003, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

60 265.003 Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame.—

61 (4) (a) The Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council shall
 62 annually accept nominations of persons to be considered for
 63 induction into the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame and shall
 64 transmit a list of up to 5 ~~20~~ nominees to the Department of
 65 Veterans' Affairs for submission to the Governor and the
 66 Cabinet, who will select the nominees to be inducted.

67 **Section 2. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) and subsection**
 68 **(6) of section 292.05, Florida Statutes, are amended, and**
 69 **subsection (8) is added to that section, to read:**

70 292.05 Duties of Department of Veterans' Affairs.—

71 (5) The department shall conduct an ongoing study on the
 72 problems and needs of those residents of this state who are
 73 veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States and the
 74 problems and needs of their spouses and dependents. The study
 75 shall include, but not be limited to:

76 (b) A survey of the needs of such persons in the areas of
 77 social services, health care, education, and employment, and any
 78 other areas of determined need, with recommendations regarding
 79 federal, state, and community services that would meet those
 80 needs. The survey must also evaluate the extent to which such
 81 persons are aware of existing federal, state, or community
 82 programs or services that meet their areas of need, with
 83 recommendations regarding increasing public awareness using
 84 administrative or legislative options.

85 (6) The department shall, by December 31 of each year,
 86 submit an annual written report to the Governor, the Cabinet,
 87 and the Legislature which describes:

88 (a) The expenses incurred in veteran service work in the
 89 state; the number, nature, and kind of cases handled by the
 90 department and by county and city veteran service officers of
 91 the state; the amounts of benefits obtained for veterans; the
 92 names and addresses of all certified veteran service officers,
 93 including county and city veteran service officers.

94 (b) The report must ~~also~~ describe the actions taken by the
 95 department in implementing subsections (4), (5), ~~and~~ (7), and
 96 (8) and include other information and recommendations as the
 97 department determines are necessary to provide information on
 98 its annual activities ~~requires~~.

99 (c) ~~(b)~~ The current status of the department's domiciliary
 100 and nursing homes established pursuant to chapter 296, including

101 all receipts and expenditures, the condition of the homes, the
102 number of residents received and discharged during the preceding
103 year, occupancy rates, staffing, and any other information
104 necessary to provide an understanding of the management,
105 conduct, and operation of the homes.

106 (d) For the report due on December 31, 2025, an evaluation
107 by the department among veterans in this state on the level of
108 health literacy and any recommendations to increase veteran
109 knowledge of available programs and services and maximize their
110 use of such resources.

111 (8) The department shall ensure coordination to the
112 greatest extent possible with the United States Department of
113 Defense to directly engage all servicemembers returning home to,
114 or electing to remain in or move to, this state following their
115 service and during re-entry into civilian life, including
116 connecting them with Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., and other
117 relevant resources. The department may engage county and city
118 veteran service officers for assistance with fulfilling this
119 duty.

120 **Section 3. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 292.115,**
121 **Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

122 292.115 Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot
123 Program.—

124 (1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall establish
125 the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program. The

126 | purpose of the pilot program is to offer to each Department of
 127 | Veterans' Affairs claims examiner and each county and city
 128 | veteran service officer, as described in s. 292.11, specialized
 129 | mental health training and certification in the prevention of
 130 | veteran suicide.

131 | (2) Individuals electing to participate in the pilot
 132 | program must be trained to identify indicators of elevated
 133 | mental health or suicide risk and provide emergency crisis
 134 | referrals for veterans expressing or exhibiting symptoms of
 135 | emotional or psychological distress. The Department of Veterans'
 136 | Affairs shall contract with an organization having proven
 137 | experience developing and implementing veteran-relevant and
 138 | evidence-based mental health and suicide prevention training to
 139 | develop the curriculum for such training. The department shall
 140 | establish and oversee the process for certifying program
 141 | participants who successfully complete such training.

142 | **Section 4. Section 295.124, Florida Statutes, is amended**
 143 | **to read:**

144 | 295.124 State approving agency for veterans' education and
 145 | training.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall act as the
 146 | state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and
 147 | training, in accordance with 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 ~~38 U.S.C. s. 1771~~
 148 | and the applicable annual contract between the state and the
 149 | Federal Government.

150 | **Section 5. Paragraph (h) is added to subsection (3) of**

151 **section 295.21, Florida Statutes, to read:**

152 295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—

153 (3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:

154 (h) Advise the Department of Veterans' Affairs on any
 155 problems or needs of retired and recently separated military
 156 personnel of this state and any problems or needs of their
 157 spouses which the corporation has knowledge of and which may be
 158 within the purview of the department in fulfilling its duties.

159 **Section 6. Paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section**
 160 **295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

161 295.22 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.—

162 (5) COLLABORATION.—

163 (c) The corporation may collaborate with other state
 164 agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange,
 165 marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives that
 166 include, but are not limited to, the program created by this
 167 section and those within any of the following:

168 1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

169 a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

170 b. Hope Navigators Program.

171 2. The Department of Commerce:

172 a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and local veteran
 173 employment representatives.

174 b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards
 175 employment and recruitment services.

176 c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

177 d. Efforts of the direct-support organization ~~Florida~~
 178 ~~Defense Support Task Force~~ created under s. 288.987, the Florida
 179 Small Business Development Center Network, and the direct
 180 support organization established in s. 288.012(6).

181 3. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation,
 182 reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee
 183 waivers.

184 4. The Department of Education:

185 a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

186 b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at
 187 public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level
 188 training and education acquired in the military under s.
 189 1004.096.

190 5. The Department of Health:

191 a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

192 b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online
 193 Response expedited licensing.

194 6. The Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help.

195 **Section 7. Section 296.43, Florida Statutes, is amended to**
 196 **read:**

197 296.43 Purpose and statewide plan.—

198 (1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to provide for
 199 the establishment of basic standards for the operation of
 200 veterans' adult day health care programs for eligible veterans

201 in need of such services.

202 (2) STATEWIDE PLAN.—The department shall develop a plan to
 203 establish adult day health care facilities across this state to
 204 serve veterans and their families.

205 (a) The plan must include:

206 1. Recommendations for locations that will have the most
 207 impact on the veteran population. In making such
 208 recommendations, the department shall:

209 a. Provide an evaluation of data, including, but not
 210 limited to, veteran population and veteran population
 211 demographics.

212 b. Provide an assessment of anticipated veteran needs.

213 2. Potential state and federal participation.

214 3. Estimates for the daily cost of running the facilities.

215 4. Estimates for the daily cost of maintenance and general
 216 upkeep of the facilities.

217 5. Location of existing potential infrastructure.

218 6. Potential construction costs.

219 (b) The department shall provide a report detailing the
 220 plan required by this subsection to the President of the Senate
 221 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by November 1,
 222 2025.

223 **Section 8. Subsection (92) of section 320.08058, Florida**
 224 **Statutes, is amended to read:**

225 320.08058 Specialty license plates.—

226 (92) GADSDEN FLAG LICENSE PLATES.—

227 (a) The department shall develop a Gadsden Flag license
228 plate as provided in this section and s. 320.08053. The design
229 of the license plate must replicate the color, layout, and
230 design of the Gadsden Flag. The word "Florida" must appear at
231 the top of the plate, and the words "Don't Tread on Me" must
232 appear at the bottom of the plate.

233 (b) The annual use fees shall be distributed to the
234 Florida Veterans Foundation, a direct-support organization of
235 the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and must be used to benefit
236 veterans. Up to 10 percent of the proceeds may be used for
237 ~~continuing~~ promotion and marketing of the license plate and for
238 administrative costs.

239 **Section 9.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.