

By Senator Burgess

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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

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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

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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:

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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

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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 Program.—

123 (1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall establish the
124 Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program. The purpose
125 of the pilot program is to offer to each Department of Veterans'
126 Affairs claims examiner and each county and city veteran service
127 officer, as described in s. 292.11, specialized mental health
128 training and certification in the prevention of veteran suicide.

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

140 Section 4. Section 295.124, Florida Statutes, is amended to
141 read:

142 295.124 State approving agency for veterans' education and
143 training.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall act as the
144 state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and
145 training, in accordance with 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 ~~38 U.S.C. s. 1771~~

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146 and the applicable annual contract between the state and the
147 Federal Government.

148 Section 5. Paragraph (h) is added to subsection (3) of
149 section 295.21, Florida Statutes, to read:

150 295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—

151 (3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:

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

157 Section 6. Paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section
158 295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

159 295.22 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.—

160 (5) COLLABORATION.—

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

166 1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

167 a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

168 b. Hope Navigators Program.

169 2. The Department of Commerce:

170 a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and local veteran
171 employment representatives.

172 b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards
173 employment and recruitment services.

174 c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

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

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

182 4. The Department of Education:

183 a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

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

188 5. The Department of Health:

189 a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

190 b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online
191 Response expedited licensing.

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

193 Section 7. Section 296.43, Florida Statutes, is amended to
194 read:

195 296.43 Purpose and statewide plan.-

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

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

203 (a) The plan must include:

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

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

210 b. Provide an assessment of anticipated veteran needs.

211 2. Potential state and federal participation.

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

213 4. Estimates for the daily cost of maintenance and general
214 upkeep of the facilities.

215 5. Location of existing potential infrastructure.

216 6. Potential construction costs.

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

221 Section 8. Subsection (92) of section 320.08058, Florida
222 Statutes, is amended to read:

223 320.08058 Specialty license plates.—

224 (92) GADSDEN FLAG LICENSE PLATES.—

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

231 (b) The annual use fees shall be distributed to the Florida
232 Veterans Foundation, a direct-support organization of the

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233 Department of Veterans' Affairs, and must be used to benefit
234 veterans. Up to 10 percent of the proceeds may be used for
235 ~~continuing~~ promotion and marketing of the license plate and for
236 administrative costs.

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