

By Senator Jones

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to business development incentives for
3 veterans and military spouses; providing a short
4 title; amending s. 295.187, F.S.; defining the term
5 “veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business”;
6 providing for contracting preferences for such
7 businesses; creating s. 295.189, F.S.; providing
8 definitions; requiring the Department of State to
9 waive specified fees for certain businesses; providing
10 eligibility requirements for the fee waivers;
11 providing applicability; providing specified tax
12 exemptions for certain businesses; requiring the
13 Department of Revenue to develop procedures for such
14 exemptions; providing that such exemptions apply for a
15 specified period for certain businesses relocating to
16 this state; establishing the Veteran and Military
17 Spouse Entrepreneurship Program in consultation with
18 the Department of Commerce; providing requirements for
19 the program; requiring that certain businesses receive
20 expedited processing for certain certifications;
21 providing for rulemaking and interagency cooperation;
22 providing reporting requirements; providing an
23 effective date.

24
25 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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27 Section 1. Present paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of
28 section 295.187, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as paragraph
29 (e), a new paragraph (d) is added to that subsection, and

34-01662-25

20251172__

30 subsection (4) of that section is amended, to read:

31 295.187 Florida Veteran Business Enterprise Opportunity
32 Act.—

33 (3) DEFINITIONS.—For the purpose of this section, the term:

34 (d) "Veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business" has
35 the same meaning as in s. 295.189(3).

36 (4) VENDOR PREFERENCE.—

37 (a) A state agency, when considering two or more bids,
38 proposals, or replies for the procurement of commodities or
39 contractual services, at least one of which is from a certified
40 veteran business enterprise or veteran-owned or military spouse-
41 owned business, which are equal with respect to all relevant
42 considerations, including price, quality, and service, shall
43 award such procurement or contract to the certified veteran
44 business enterprise or the veteran-owned or military spouse-
45 owned business.

46 (b) Notwithstanding s. 287.057(12), if a veteran business
47 enterprise or a veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business
48 entitled to the vendor preference under this section and one or
49 more businesses entitled to this preference or another vendor
50 preference provided by law submit bids, proposals, or replies
51 for procurement of commodities or contractual services which are
52 equal with respect to all relevant considerations, including
53 price, quality, and service, the state agency shall award the
54 procurement or contract to the business having the smallest net
55 worth.

56 (c) Political subdivisions of the state are encouraged to
57 offer a similar consideration to businesses certified under this
58 section.

34-01662-25

20251172__

59 Section 2. Section 295.189, Florida Statutes, is created to
60 read:

61 295.189 Business development incentives for veterans and
62 military spouses.-

63 (1) SHORT TITLE.-This act may be cited as the "Florida
64 Veterans and Military Spouse Business Development Act."

65 (2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

66 (a) The Legislature finds that veterans and military
67 spouses contribute significantly to this state's economy through
68 their skills, expertise, and entrepreneurial efforts.

69 (b) The Legislature recognizes the challenges of frequent
70 relocations and economic instability faced by many military
71 spouses.

72 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that this act
73 attract and support veteran-owned and military spouse-owned
74 businesses by providing financial and operational incentives.

75 (3) DEFINITIONS.-For the purpose of this section, the term:

76 (a) "Military spouse" means the spouse of:

77 1. An active duty member of the United States Armed Forces;
78 or

79 2. A veteran.

80 (b) "Veteran" has the same meaning as in s. 1.01(14).

81 (c) "Veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business" means
82 a business entity that is at least 51 percent owned, controlled,
83 or managed by one or more veterans or military spouses.

84 (4) FEE WAIVER.-

85 (a) The Department of State shall waive all fees for:

86 1. A new business established by a veteran or military
87 spouse.

34-01662-25

20251172__

88 2. An existing veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
89 business that relocates to this state.

90 (b) The Department of State shall establish registration
91 requirements for such fee waivers, which must include:

92 1. For veterans, a DD Form 214 or another acceptable form
93 of identification as specified by the Department of Veterans'
94 Affairs; or

95 2. For military spouses, verification of a military spouse
96 relationship with a spouse who is on active duty.

97 (c) The fee waivers apply to veteran-owned or military
98 spouse-owned businesses established or certified between July 1,
99 2025, and December 31, 2030.

100 (5) TAX EXEMPTIONS.—

101 (a) Eligible veteran-owned and military spouse-owned
102 businesses shall receive:

103 1. A 5-year exemption from the state corporate income tax
104 and state franchise tax.

105 2. A one-time sales tax exemption on equipment and supplies
106 directly related to its business operations.

107 (b) The Department of Revenue shall establish procedures
108 for claiming these exemptions.

109 (c) For businesses relocating to this state, tax exemptions
110 apply for 5 years after the date of certification.

111 (6) VETERAN AND MILITARY SPOUSE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM.—

112 (a) The Department of Veterans' Affairs, in conjunction
113 with the Department of Commerce, shall establish the Veteran and
114 Military Spouse Entrepreneurship Program, including an
115 application process and eligibility criteria. The program must
116 include:

34-01662-25

20251172__

117 1. Personalized business mentorship and consulting
118 services.

119 2. Assistance with obtaining startup capital through state
120 and federal funding programs.

121 3. Educational resources, including workshops on business
122 planning, marketing, and regulatory compliance.

123 (b) Priority must be given to applications from businesses
124 that are veteran-owned or military spouse-owned.

125 (7) EXPEDITED PROCESSING.—Veteran-owned and military
126 spouse-owned businesses must receive expedited processing for
127 certifications.

128 (8) ADMINISTRATION.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs,
129 the Department of Revenue, and the Department of State shall:

130 (a) Develop rules for administering this section.

131 (b) Ensure interagency cooperation for seamless
132 implementation of this section.

133 (9) ANNUAL REPORTING.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs
134 shall submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of
135 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that
136 includes:

137 (a) The number of veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
138 businesses that were established in this state or that relocated
139 to this state.

140 (b) Economic metrics such as jobs created by and tax
141 revenue impact of veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
142 businesses.

143 (c) Demographic data for the participating veterans and
144 military spouses.

145 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.