

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/HB 1211](#)

TITLE: Public Safety

SPONSOR(S): Abbott, Alvarez, D.

COMPANION BILL: [SB 1554](#) (Collins)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Government Operations](#)

15 Y, 0 N, As CS

[Justice Budget](#)

[Judiciary](#)

[State Affairs](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill creates a Counterterrorism/Counterintelligence Unit with the Department of Law Enforcement composed of seven regional teams to proactively address terrorist threats, foreign intelligence activity, and insider threats. It expands a law enforcement training requirement by mandating resilience instruction and adds a new Basic Recruit Training Program exemption for individuals with at least five years of intelligence or counterintelligence experience. The bill broadens peer support communication protections for first responders to include prosecutors, crime scene technicians, and certain judges and clerks. It clarifies that amputees may serve as first responders if they meet certification requirements without accommodation. The bill also creates two honorary medals for first responders and revises missing persons procedures by extending certain reporting deadlines.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill will likely have a negative, indeterminate fiscal impact on the state.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill creates the Counterterrorism/Counterintelligence Unit within the [Florida Department of Law Enforcement](#) (FDLE) composed of seven regional teams to proactively address terrorist threats, foreign intelligence collection operations, and insider threats. Its duties include gathering intelligence, analyzing behavioral patterns, planning and executing enforcement actions, and coordinating with other units as needed to neutralize threats. (Sections [2](#) and [6](#))

The bill requires the [Criminal Justice and Training Commission](#) (CJSTC) to establish and maintain standards for basic skills training in resilience for law enforcement officers, covering topics such as mental health, sleep, trauma, and exposure to hazardous substances. (Section [8](#))

The bill adds a new [exemption from the Basic Recruit Training Program](#) for individuals who have served as intelligence or counterintelligence officers or agents for at least five years, provided there is no more than a 4-year break in service. (Section [7](#))

The bill broadens the scope of [peer support protections for first responders](#) by expanding the definitions of “first responder” and “affiliated first responder organization” to include prosecutors, crime scene technicians, and judges and clerks involved in criminal cases. Under current law, peer support communications cannot be disclosed in legal or disciplinary proceedings, except in limited circumstances. (Section [3](#))

The bill clarifies that amputee first responders may continue to serve if they meet certification requirements without accommodation. (Section [9](#))

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The bill creates two state honorary medals: the Florida Medal of Valor for first responders, and related personnel, who go above and beyond to save lives, and the Florida Blue/Red Heart Medal for law enforcement, correctional, and correctional probation officers and firefighters injured in the line of duty. These awards, administered by FDLE and authorized to be presented by the Governor or his or her designee, require a nomination by a state resident or employing agency. Recipients will be selected by a five-member board, with members serving two-year terms—three appointed by the Governor, and one each appointed by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives. At least three board members must be active or former law enforcement officers or firefighters. (Section [10](#))

The bill revises procedures for handling [missing persons reports](#) by changing the required review from monthly to annually of cases in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). It also extends the reporting deadline, requiring that missing persons reports be submitted to NamUs within 90 days of being filed, rather than within two hours. The current review and reporting timeframes relating to the Florida Crime Information Center and National Crime Information Center remain unchanged. (Section [4](#))

The bill designates the act at the “Florida First Responder and Florida Public Safety Act.” (Section [1](#))

The bill makes conforming changes related to the NamUs database. (Section [5](#))

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [11](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill will likely have a negative fiscal impact on the state. It requires FDLE to establish and operate a new Counterterrorism/Counterintelligence Unit, which will incur costs related to staffing, training, and equipping seven regional teams. Additionally, CJSTC may incur insignificant costs associated with developing and implementing new basic skills training in resilience. The administration of the Florida Medal of Valor and the Florida Blue/Red Heart Medal will also likely result in minimal expenses for application processing and award production. However, the costs are indeterminate at this time.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[Florida Department of Law Enforcement](#)

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) is a statewide law enforcement agency headed by the Governor and Cabinet.¹ The chief administrative officer of FDLE, statutorily known as the executive director but commonly referred to as the Commissioner of FDLE,² is “appointed by the Governor subject to a majority vote of the Governor and Cabinet, with the Governor on the prevailing side.”³ The executive director must be a resident of the state and have served five years as a police executive or possess training and experience in police affairs or public administration.⁴

The mission of FDLE is to “promote public safety and strengthen domestic security by providing services in partnership with local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies to prevent, investigate, and solve crimes while protecting Florida’s citizens and visitors.”⁵ FDLE is subdivided into five divisions: Criminal Investigations and Forensic Science, Criminal Justice Information, Criminal Justice Professionalism, Capitol Police, and Executive

¹ [Art. IV, s. 4\(g\), FLA. CONST.](#); see also s. [20.201, F.S.](#)

² Florida Department of Law Enforcement, [Statement of Agency Organization and Operation](#) (last visited March 28, 2025); see also Florida Department of Law Enforcement, [FDLE Headquarters](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

³ S. [20.201\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁴ S. [943.03\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁵ Florida Department of Law Enforcement, [Statement of Agency Organization and Operation](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

Direction and Business Support.⁶ Additionally, the Florida Constitution required the creation of an Office of Domestic Security and Counterterrorism be created within FDLE.⁷

Chief of Domestic Security

The executive director of FDLE, or his or her designee, serves as the Chief of Domestic Security.⁸ This role involves coordinating statewide efforts to assess, prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and immigration enforcement incidents.⁹ The Chief is responsible for advising state leadership with recommendations based on ongoing assessments, coordinating proposals to reduce vulnerabilities, leveraging public and private resources, and utilizing regional task forces for support.¹⁰ FDLE maintains seven regional operations centers within the state.¹¹

Peer Support Protections for First Responders

First responders are often exposed to incidents of death and destruction that can result in the development of behavioral health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicide.¹² To cope with the demands and stresses associated with their occupations, some first responders choose to participate in peer support. “Peer support” is the provision of physical, moral, or emotional support to a first responder by a first responder peer for the purpose of addressing physical or emotional conditions or other issues associated with being a first responder.¹³ Under current law an eligible “first responder” includes a:

- Law enforcement officer.
- Firefighter.
- Emergency medical technician or paramedic.
- 911 public safety telecommunicator.
- Correctional officer.
- Correctional probation officer.¹⁴

A “first responder peer” is a person who:

- Is not a health care practitioner.
- Has experience working as or with a first responder, including active, volunteer, and retired first responders, regarding any physical or emotional conditions or issues associated with the first responder’s employment.
- Has been designated by the first responder’s employing agency or affiliated first responder organization¹⁵ to provide peer support and has received training for that purpose.¹⁶

Peer support communications generally cannot be disclosed or used in legal or disciplinary proceedings, except in limited circumstances: if the peer is the subject of a complaint, if the first responder consents in writing, if criminal activity is suspected, or if there is a reasonable fear for someone’s safety.¹⁷ First responder peers who disclose

⁶ *Id.*; see also [s. 20.201\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁷ [Art. IV, s. 4\(g\), FLA. CONST.](#)

⁸ [S. 943.0311\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁹ [S. 943.0311\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰ [S. 943.0311\(1\)\(b\)-\(e\), F.S.](#)

¹¹ The regional operations centers are located in: Fort Myers, Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Pensacola, Tallahassee, and Tampa Bay. FDLE, [FDLE Regions and Divisions](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

¹² Ruderman Family Foundation, [The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

¹³ [S. 111.09\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴ [S. 111.09\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#) The definition also includes a volunteer law enforcement officer, firefighter, emergency medical technician, or paramedic engaged by the state or a local government. [S. 112.1815\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵ “Affiliated first responder organization” includes, but is not limited to, any of the following organizations: regularly organized volunteer firefighting departments or associations; regularly organized volunteer ambulance services; combination fire departments. [S. 111.09\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁶ [S. 111.09\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷ [S. 111.09\(2\), F.S.](#)

information under these exceptions are provided immunity.¹⁸ The law also clarifies that information or evidence obtained from sources other than a peer support communication is not protected.¹⁹

Missing Persons Reports

Current law requires all law enforcement agencies to adopt written policies for investigating missing child and adult reports.²⁰ These policies must ensure timely and thorough investigations and outline procedures for handling such cases, including accepting reports, managing investigations, and maintaining records stored in the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC),²¹ the National Crime Information Center (NCIC),²² and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).²³ Agencies must review these cases at least monthly and determine whether to maintain them in the database.²⁴

Agencies must accept missing child and adult reports in the jurisdiction where the person was last seen.²⁵ Once a report is filed, law enforcement must notify other relevant agencies and input the information into the state and national databases within two hours.²⁶

Criminal Justice and Training Commission

In Florida, law enforcement, correctional, and correctional probation (criminal justice) officers must meet specific training requirements to become certified and maintain their certification. These standards are established by the Criminal Justice and Training Commission (CJSTC), which operates under FDLE.²⁷

Before becoming certified, candidates must complete a CJSTC-approved Basic Recruit Training Program specific to their criminal justice discipline.²⁸ This program provides foundational knowledge and skills necessary for the respective roles.²⁹ To be eligible for entry into the Basic Recruit Training Program, candidates must first pass a CJSTC-approved basic skills assessment, unless they qualify for an exemption (i.e., military veteran or those with an associate degree or higher).³⁰ After completing the program, candidates must pass the State Officer Certification Examination for their discipline.³¹ The examination assesses the candidate's knowledge and proficiency in the required competencies. As part of the certification process, criminal justice agencies conduct background investigations and submit an Officer Certification Application on the candidate's behalf.³² The CJSTC reviews the application to verify that all minimum qualifications have been met.

¹⁸ *See Id.*

¹⁹ S. [111.09\(3\), F.S.](#)

²⁰ S. [937.021\(1\), F.S.](#)

²¹ The FCIC is a statewide system that provides law enforcement agencies with real-time access to various criminal justice information. *See* U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, [Florida Crime Information Center](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

²² The NCIC is a centralized criminal justice database operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that provides law enforcement agencies across the U.S. with real-time access to critical criminal justice information. *See* FBI, [PIA: National Crime Information Center \(NCIC\)](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

²³ NamUs is a national database designed to help law enforcement, medical examiners, coroners, and the public track and solve cases of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons. *See* NamUs, [What is NamUs?](#) (last visited March 28, 2025).

²⁴ S. [937.021\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

²⁵ S. [937.021\(3\), F.S.](#)

²⁶ *See* s. [937.021\(4\), F.S.](#)

²⁷ *See* s. [943.11\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁸ S. [943.19\(9\), F.S.](#)

²⁹ R. 11B-35.002(1), F.A.C.

³⁰ *See* s. [943.17\(1\)\(g\), F.S.](#) Basic skills topics include violent crime, domestic violence, diverse populations, stun guns, electronic databases, victim's rights, sexual assault, and others. *See* ss. [943.17](#), [943.171](#), [943.1715](#), [943.1717](#), [943.1719](#), [943.172](#), [943.1724, F.S.](#)

³¹ *See* s. [943.19\(10\), F.S.](#); r. 11B-30.0062, F.A.C.

³² R. 11B-27.002, F.A.C.; *see also* FDLE, [Officer Requirements How to Become a Certified Officer in Florida](#) (last visited March 27, 2025); s. [943.133\(3\), F.S.](#)

Certified officers are required to complete continuing education and training to maintain their certification.³³ This includes periodic retraining in areas such as legal updates, defensive tactics, firearms proficiency, and other relevant topics to ensure officers remain knowledgeable and effective in their duties.³⁴

[Exemptions from The Basic Recruit Training Program](#)

Candidates may be exempt from completing the Basic Recruit Training Program if they meet certain criteria.³⁵ To qualify, candidates must have either:

- Completed comparable law enforcement training in another state or with the federal government and served as a full-time sworn officer for at least one year with no more than an eight-year break in service, or
- Served in special operations forces for at least five years with no more than a four-year break, and have relevant, verifiable training and experience.

The employing agency must submit documentation to CJSTC verifying the exemptions. CJSTC will determine eligibility and may require additional training.³⁶ Once granted an exemption, candidates have one year to complete any additional CJSTC-required training, demonstrate proficiency in high-liability areas,³⁷ and pass the State Officer Certification Examination.³⁸

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #	HOUSE SPONSOR(S)	SENATE SPONSOR	OTHER INFORMATION
2024	CS/HB 1415	Chamberlin	Collins	The bill became law on October 1, 2024.
2023	CS/SB 1332	Stark	Martin	The bill became law on July 1, 2023.

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Government Operations Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	4/1/2025	Toliver	Villa
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	Removed provisions related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment practices of first responders. • Consolidation and operation of 911 services. • Requirement to conduct a feasibility study on hurricane-hardened public safety operations centers. • Requirement to create a task force studying the consolidation of state law enforcement functions. 			
Justice Budget Subcommittee				
Judiciary Committee				
State Affairs Committee				

³³ See [s. 943.135\(1\), F.S.](#)

³⁴ See r. 11B-27.00212, F.A.C.

³⁵ S. [943.131\(2\), F.S.](#)

³⁶ S. [943.131\(3\), F.S.](#)

³⁷ High liability topics include: firearms, vehicle operations, defensive tactics, and first aid. See r. 11B-35.0024, F.A.C.

³⁸ S. [943.131\(4\), F.S.](#)

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.
