

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to veterans; amending s. 295.124,
3 F.S.; updating a reference to federal law relating to
4 the designation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs
5 as the state approving agency for veterans' education
6 and training; amending s. 295.21, F.S.; revising the
7 membership of the board of directors of Florida is for
8 Veterans, Inc.; conforming provisions to changes made
9 by the act; amending s. 295.22, F.S.; renaming the
10 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program
11 administered by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., as the
12 Veterans Florida Opportunity Program; providing that
13 grant reimbursements are limited to a specified amount
14 per eligible trainee per fiscal year; deleting a
15 provision that allowed for reimbursement of only
16 permanent full-time employees; providing that training
17 costs for a trainee must be equal to or greater than a
18 specified amount; revising requirements for a grant
19 agreement between the corporation and a business
20 requesting funds; authorizing the use of grant funds
21 as educational stipends for specified individuals
22 while training at locations of the University of
23 Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences;
24 requiring Florida is for Veterans, Inc., and the
25 university to enter into a grant agreement; requiring

26 | the corporation to determine the amount and structure
 27 | of any educational stipend; specifying that such
 28 | stipends be used only for specified training;
 29 | providing an appropriation; creating s. 295.25, F.S.;
 30 | prohibiting the Department of State from charging
 31 | veterans who reside in this state fees for the filing
 32 | of specified documents; limiting a veteran's use of
 33 | the exemption; amending s. 322.21, F.S.; providing an
 34 | exemption from driver license fees to members of the
 35 | Florida National Guard and their spouses; amending s.
 36 | 379.354, F.S.; providing a reduced fee for persons who
 37 | are active or retired members of the United States
 38 | Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve,
 39 | the National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, and
 40 | the United States Coast Guard Reserve for resident
 41 | lifetime hunting licenses and resident lifetime
 42 | sportsman's licenses; amending s. 394.47891, F.S.;
 43 | providing that the chief judge of a judicial circuit
 44 | has the exclusive authority to determine whether
 45 | veterans may participate in the veterans treatment
 46 | court of that circuit; providing an effective date.

47 |

48 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

49 |

50 | **Section 1. Section 295.124, Florida Statutes, is amended**

HB 1241

2025

51 **to read:**

52 295.124 State approving agency for veterans' education and
53 training.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall act as the
54 state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and
55 training, in accordance with 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 ~~38 U.S.C. s. 1771~~
56 and the applicable annual contract between the state and the
57 Federal Government.

58 **Section 2. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3), paragraph (a)**
59 **of subsection (4), and paragraph (c) of subsection (8) of**
60 **section 295.21, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:**

61 295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—

62 (3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:

63 (d) Implement the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment
64 ~~and Training Services~~ Program established by s. 295.22.

65 (4) GOVERNANCE.—

66 (a) The corporation shall be governed by a 12-member ~~an~~
67 ~~11-member~~ board of directors. The Governor, the President of the
68 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
69 each appoint three voting members to the board. The appointments
70 made by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House
71 of Representatives may not be from the body over which he or she
72 presides. In making appointments, the Governor, the President of
73 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives
74 shall ~~must~~ consider representation by active or retired military
75 personnel and their spouses, representing a range of ages and

76 persons with expertise in business, education, marketing, and
 77 information management. Additionally, the President of the
 78 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
 79 each appoint one member from the body over which he or she
 80 presides to serve on the board as ex officio, nonvoting members,
 81 and the Governor shall appoint one member who is a secretary, or
 82 his or her designee, with experience in economic or workforce
 83 development from an executive agency, as an ex officio,
 84 nonvoting member.

85 (8) ANNUAL REPORT.—The corporation shall submit an annual
 86 progress report and work plan by December 1 to the Governor, the
 87 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
 88 Representatives. The report must include:

89 (c) Status of the Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment
 90 ~~and Training Services~~ Program administered under s. 295.22.

91 **Section 3. Section 295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to**
 92 **read:**

93 295.22 Veterans Florida Opportunity Employment ~~and~~
 94 ~~Training Services~~ Program.—

95 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—The Legislature finds
 96 that the state has a compelling interest in ensuring that each
 97 veteran or his or her spouse who is a resident of this state
 98 finds employment that meets his or her professional goals and
 99 receives the training or education necessary to meet those
 100 goals. The Legislature also finds that connecting dedicated,

101 well-trained veterans with businesses that need a dedicated,
102 well-trained workforce is of paramount importance. The
103 Legislature recognizes that veterans or their spouses may not
104 currently have the skills to meet the workforce needs of Florida
105 employers and may require assistance in obtaining additional
106 workforce training or in transitioning their skills to meet the
107 demands of the marketplace. It is the intent of the Legislature
108 that the Veterans Florida Opportunity ~~Employment and Training~~
109 ~~Services~~ Program coordinate and meet the needs of veterans and
110 their spouses and the business community to enhance the economy
111 of this state.

112 (2) DEFINITIONS.—For the purposes of this section, the
113 term:

114 (a) "Secondary industry business" is a business that the
115 state has an additional interest in supporting and for which
116 veterans and their spouses may have directly transferable
117 skills. Such businesses are in the fields of health care,
118 agriculture, commercial construction, education, law
119 enforcement, and public service.

120 (b) "Servicemember" means any person serving as a member
121 of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active
122 duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United
123 States Reserve Forces.

124 (c) "Target industry business" is a business as defined in
125 s. 288.005.

126 (d) "Target market" means servicemembers of the United
127 States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge,
128 veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of
129 the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes
130 spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such
131 individuals who have not remarried.

132 (3) CREATION.—The Veterans Florida Opportunity ~~Employment~~
133 ~~and Training Services~~ Program is created within the Department
134 of Veterans' Affairs to assist in connecting servicemembers,
135 veterans, or their spouses who are in the target market with
136 businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and
137 with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and
138 resources. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce
139 demands of businesses in this state by facilitating access to
140 training and education in high-demand fields for such
141 individuals and to inspire the growth and development of
142 veteran-owned small businesses.

143 (4) ADMINISTRATION.—Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall
144 administer the Veterans Florida Opportunity ~~Employment and~~
145 ~~Training Services~~ Program and perform all of the following
146 functions:

147 (a) Conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at
148 individuals within the target market who reside in or have an
149 interest in relocating to this state and who are seeking
150 employment. Marketing must include information related to how

151 military experience can be valuable to a target industry or
152 secondary industry business. Such efforts may include attending
153 job fairs and events; hosting events for servicemembers,
154 veterans, and their spouses or the business community; and using
155 digital and social media and direct mail campaigns. The
156 corporation shall also include such marketing as part of its
157 main marketing campaign.

158 (b) Assist individuals in the target market who reside in
159 or relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with
160 target industry or secondary industry businesses. The
161 corporation shall offer skills assessments to such individuals
162 and assist them in establishing employment goals and applying
163 for and achieving gainful employment.

164 1. Assessment may include skill match information, skill
165 gap analysis, résumé creation, translation of military skills
166 into civilian workforce skills, and translation of military
167 achievements and experience into generally understood civilian
168 workforce skills.

169 2. Assistance may include providing the servicemember,
170 veteran, or his or her spouse with information on current
171 workforce demand by industry or geographic region, creating
172 employment goals, and aiding or teaching general knowledge
173 related to completing applications.

174 3. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by
175 electronic means, as determined by the corporation to be most

176 efficient and best meet the needs of veterans or their spouses.

177 (c) Assist Florida target industry and secondary industry
178 businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target
179 market. The corporation shall provide services to Florida
180 businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses
181 with suitable applicants for employment. Suitable applicants
182 include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job
183 skills or may need additional training to meet the specific
184 needs of a business. The corporation shall also provide
185 information about the state and federal benefits of hiring
186 veterans.

187 (d) Create a grant program to provide funding to assist
188 individuals in the target market in meeting the workforce-skill
189 needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses
190 seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized
191 skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests
192 for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program.
193 Grant funds may be used only in the absence of available
194 veteran-specific federally funded programs. Grants may fund
195 specialized training specific to a particular business.

196 1. The program may prioritize grant funds to be used to
197 provide a certificate, a license, or nondegree training from the
198 Master Credentials List pursuant to s. 445.004(4)(h); any
199 federally created certifications or licenses; and any skills-
200 based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or

201 necessary by the corporation. Funds may be allocated only upon a
202 review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of
203 accreditation and licensure.

204 2. Grant reimbursements ~~Costs and expenditures~~ are limited
205 to \$5,000 ~~\$8,000~~ per eligible trainee per fiscal year. Qualified
206 businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training
207 provided before receiving reimbursement from the corporation
208 ~~equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a~~
209 ~~permanent, full-time employee.~~ Training costs for a trainee in a
210 fiscal year must be equal to or greater than \$5,000. Eligible
211 costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- 212 a. Tuition and fees.
- 213 b. Books and classroom materials.
- 214 c. Rental fees for facilities.

215 3. Before funds are allocated for a request pursuant to
216 this section, the corporation shall prepare a grant agreement
217 between the business requesting funds and the corporation. Such
218 agreement must include, but need not be limited to:

- 219 a. Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct
220 the instructional program, instructional program description,
221 and any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.
- 222 b. Identification of the ~~estimated~~ duration of the
223 instructional program.
- 224 c. Identification of all direct, training-related costs.
- 225 d. Identification of special program requirements that are

226 | not otherwise addressed in the agreement.

227 | e. Permission to access aggregate information specific to
228 | the wages and performance of participants upon the completion of
229 | instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must specify
230 | that any evaluation published subsequent to the instruction may
231 | not identify the employer or any individual participant.

232 | 4. A business may receive a grant under any state program
233 | and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

234 | 5. Notwithstanding subparagraph 2., grant funds may be
235 | used as educational stipends for individuals in the target
236 | market while training at any location of the University of
237 | Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences within this
238 | state. The corporation and the University of Florida shall enter
239 | into an agreement before any grant funds are expended, and the
240 | corporation shall determine the amount and structure of any
241 | educational stipend. Such stipend may be used only for such
242 | training for a period of no less than 4 months and no more than
243 | 6 months, in the absence of veteran-specific federally funded
244 | programs.

245 | (e) Contract with one or more entities to administer an
246 | entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target
247 | market in this state which connects business leaders in the
248 | state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.

249 | 1. The corporation shall award each contract in accordance
250 | with the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 to one

251 or more public or private entities that:

252 a. Demonstrate the ability to implement the program and
253 the commitment of resources, including financial resources, to
254 such programs.

255 b. Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran
256 entrepreneurs.

257 c. As determined by the corporation, have been recognized
258 for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to launch
259 successful businesses in this state.

260 2. Each contract must include performance metrics,
261 including a focus on employment and business creation. The
262 entity may also work with a university or college offering
263 related programs to refer individuals in the target market or to
264 provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may
265 include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning
266 sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables,
267 networking opportunities, support of student organizations,
268 speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

269 (f) Administer a SkillBridge initiative for target
270 industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for
271 eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who
272 wish to reside in, this state. In administering the initiative,
273 the corporation shall:

274 1. Establish and maintain, as applicable, its
275 certification for the SkillBridge initiative or any other

276 similar workforce training and transition programs established
277 by the United States Department of Defense;

278 2. Educate businesses, business associations, and eligible
279 individuals in the target market on the SkillBridge initiative
280 and its benefits, and educate military command and personnel
281 within the state on the opportunities available to eligible
282 individuals in the target market;

283 3. Assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled
284 workforce training curricula under the SkillBridge initiative,
285 including, but not limited to, apprenticeships, internships, or
286 fellowships; and

287 4. Match eligible individuals in the target market with
288 training opportunities offered by the corporation or
289 participating businesses, with the intent of having them achieve
290 gainful employment in this state upon completion of their
291 SkillBridge training.

292 (5) COLLABORATION.—

293 (a) The corporation may assist state agencies and entities
294 with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.

295 (b) The corporation is encouraged to, and may collaborate
296 with state agencies and other entities in efforts to, maximize
297 access to and provide information on one website that, if
298 possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact
299 information, if available, for state agencies and other entities
300 that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other

301 resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

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

307 1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs:

308 a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.

309 b. Hope Navigators Program.

310 2. The Department of Commerce:

311 a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and local veteran
312 employment representatives.

313 b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards
314 employment and recruitment services.

315 c. The Quick-Response Training Program.

316 d. Efforts of the Florida Defense Support Task Force
317 created under s. 288.987, the Florida Small Business Development
318 Center Network, and the direct support organization established
319 in s. 288.012(6).

320 3. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation,
321 reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee
322 waivers.

323 4. The Department of Education:

324 a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

325 b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at

326 public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level
 327 training and education acquired in the military under s.
 328 1004.096.

329 5. The Department of Health:

330 a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

331 b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online
 332 Response expedited licensing.

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

334 **Section 4.** For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the sum of \$2.5
 335 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is
 336 appropriated to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for the
 337 purposes of funding the Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.,
 338 implementation and administration of the programs described in
 339 ss. 295.21(3) (d), 295.21(3) (f), and 295.22, Florida Statutes.

340 **Section 5. Section 295.25, Florida Statutes, is created to**
 341 **read:**

342 295.25 Veterans exempt from certain filing fees.—The
 343 Department of State may not charge veterans who reside in this
 344 state the applicable fees for filing articles of organization,
 345 articles of incorporation, a certificate of limited partnership,
 346 or a partnership registration statement, or for the designation
 347 of a registered agent, if applicable, as provided in s.
 348 605.0213, s. 607.0122, s. 617.0122, s. 620.1109, or s.
 349 620.81055. A veteran may apply for this exemption only once.

350 **Section 6. Subsection (7) of section 322.21, Florida**

351 **Statutes, is amended to read:**

352 322.21 License fees; procedure for handling and collecting
353 fees.—

354 (7) (a) Any veteran honorably discharged from the Armed
355 Forces who has been issued a valid identification card by the
356 Department of Veterans' Affairs in accordance with s. 295.17,
357 has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans
358 Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100-percent total and
359 permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation,
360 or has been determined to have a service-connected total and
361 permanent disability rating of 100 percent, is in receipt of
362 disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States
363 Armed Services, and who is qualified to obtain a driver license
364 under this chapter is exempt from all fees required by this
365 section.

366 (b) A member of the Florida National Guard who has been
367 issued a valid identification card by the Department of Military
368 Affairs and his or her spouse are exempt from all fees required
369 by this section.

370 **Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (11) and paragraph**
371 **(a) of subsection (12) of section 379.354, Florida Statutes, are**
372 **amended to read:**

373 379.354 Recreational licenses, permits, and authorization
374 numbers; fees established.—

375 (11) RESIDENT LIFETIME HUNTING LICENSES.—

376 (a) Lifetime hunting licenses are available to residents
 377 only, as follows, for:

378 1. Persons 4 years of age or younger, for a fee of \$200.

379 2. Persons 5 years of age or older, but under 13 years of
 380 age, for a fee of \$350.

381 3. Persons 13 years of age or older, for a fee of \$500.

382 4. Persons who are active or retired members of the United
 383 States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the
 384 National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United
 385 States Coast Guard Reserve, for a fee of \$250.

386 (12) RESIDENT LIFETIME SPORTSMAN'S LICENSES.—

387 (a) Lifetime sportsman's licenses are available to
 388 residents only, as follows, for:

389 1. Persons 4 years of age or younger, for a fee of \$400.

390 2. Persons 5 years of age or older, but under 13 years of
 391 age, for a fee of \$700.

392 3. Persons 13 years of age or older, for a fee of \$1,000.

393 4. Persons who are active or retired members of the United
 394 States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the
 395 National Guard, the United States Coast Guard, or the United
 396 States Coast Guard Reserve, for a fee of \$400.

397 **Section 8. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of section**
 398 **394.47891, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

399 394.47891 Veterans treatment court programs.—

400 (3) AUTHORIZATION.—

HB 1241

2025

401 (d) The chief judge ~~and state attorney~~ of the judicial
402 circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court
403 program has ~~have~~ the exclusive authority to determine whether
404 veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate
405 in the veterans treatment court program of ~~within~~ the circuit.

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