

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to veterans' assistance; creating s.  
3 295.235, F.S.; requiring the Department of Veterans'  
4 Affairs, subject to appropriation, to expand programs  
5 connecting veterans and their families and survivors  
6 to certain services, benefits, and support; requiring  
7 the department to host public events for such purpose;  
8 requiring the department to submit an annual report to  
9 the Governor and Legislature; providing an effective  
10 date.

11  
12 WHEREAS, Florida offers its population of 1.4 million  
13 veterans unique benefits, such as in-state tuition rates for  
14 veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, several  
15 layers of property tax exemptions, and expanded veterans'  
16 preference, including extensive benefits and licensure and fee  
17 waivers, for many activities and occupations, and

18 WHEREAS, veterans' benefits and services provided by the  
19 State of Florida are meant to complement and augment available  
20 federal programs to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary  
21 state expense for a federally funded service or benefit, and

22 WHEREAS, with only 749,000 Florida veterans enrolled in  
23 earned health care services from the United States Department of  
24 Veterans Affairs, hundreds of thousands of the state's veterans  
25 and their families are not taking advantage of earned federal,

26 | state, and local services, benefits, and support, and

27 |       WHEREAS, while Department of Veterans' Affairs veterans'  
 28 | claims examiners assisted more than 245,000 veterans in  
 29 | providing information and counsel on earned services, benefits,  
 30 | and support by the end of fiscal year 2024, additional federal  
 31 | dollars for Florida veterans remain untouched due to a lack of  
 32 | awareness, and

33 |       WHEREAS, a corresponding increase in the quality and  
 34 | quantity of outreach opportunities linking veterans with earned  
 35 | benefits through the Department of Veterans' Affairs will not  
 36 | only increase the quality of life for Florida veterans and their  
 37 | families, but provide additional federal dollars to bolster  
 38 | local economies, NOW, THEREFORE,

39 |

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

41 |

42 |       **Section 1. Section 295.235, Florida Statutes, is created**  
 43 | **to read:**

44 |       295.235 Funds for promoting veteran assistance.—

45 |       (1) Subject to an appropriation by the Legislature of  
 46 | \$500,000 in nonrecurring funds, the Department of Veterans'  
 47 | Affairs shall enhance and expand its Internet-based, mobile  
 48 | application, printed, social media, and in-person outreach  
 49 | programs through various means for the purpose of connecting  
 50 | veterans, their families, and their survivors with earned

51 services, benefits, and support beyond existing underfunded  
52 efforts.

53 (2) Using appropriated funds, the department must host at  
54 least two public events each year to disseminate information to  
55 in-person and virtual attendees regarding benefits and services  
56 available to veterans, including, but not limited to,  
57 educational, medical, insurance, and disability benefits.

58 (3) The department must submit an annual report to the  
59 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the  
60 House of Representatives which includes the number of public  
61 events hosted by the department, the number of attendees at each  
62 such event, and any other information deemed necessary by the  
63 department.

64 **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.