

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.

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

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Section 1. Paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of section 295.187, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as paragraph (e), subsection (4) is amended, and a new paragraph (d) is added to subsection (3), to read:

295.187 Florida Veteran Business Enterprise Opportunity Act.—

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

(d) "Veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business" has the same meaning as in s. 295.189(1).

(4) VENDOR PREFERENCE.—

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

(b) Notwithstanding s. 287.057(12), if a veteran business enterprise or veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business entitled to the vendor preference under this section and one or more businesses entitled to this preference or another vendor

51 preference provided by law submit bids, proposals, or replies
52 for procurement of commodities or contractual services which are
53 equal with respect to all relevant considerations, including
54 price, quality, and service, the state agency shall award the
55 procurement or contract to the business having the smallest net
56 worth.

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

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

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

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

66 (2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

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

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

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

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

78 (a) "Military spouse" means a spouse of:

79 1. An active duty member of the United States Armed
80 Forces; or

81 2. A veteran.

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

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

87 (4) FEE WAIVER.—

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

89 1. A new business established by a veteran or military
90 spouse.

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

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

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

98 2. For military spouses, verification of a military spouse
99 relationship and that the other spouse is on active duty.

100 (c) The fee waivers shall apply to veteran-owned or

101 military spouse-owned businesses established or certified
102 between July 1, 2025, and December 31, 2030.

103 (5) TAX EXEMPTIONS.—

104 (a) Eligible veteran-owned and military spouse-owned
105 businesses shall receive:

106 1. A 5-year exemption from the state corporate income tax
107 and state franchise tax.

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

110 (b) The Department of Revenue shall establish procedures
111 for claiming these exemptions.

112 (c) For businesses relocating to this state, tax
113 exemptions shall apply for 5 years after the date of
114 certification.

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

116 (a) The Department of Veterans' Affairs, in conjunction
117 with the Department of Commerce, shall establish the Veteran and
118 Military Spouse Entrepreneurship Program, including an
119 application process and eligibility criteria. The program shall
120 include:

121 1. Personalized business mentorship and consulting
122 services.

123 2. Assistance with obtaining startup capital through state
124 and federal funding programs.

125 3. Educational resources, including workshops on business

126 planning, marketing, and regulatory compliance.

127 (b) Priority shall be given to businesses that veteran-
128 owned or military spouse-owned.

129 (7) EXPEDITED PROCESSING.—Veteran-owned and military
130 spouse-owned businesses shall receive expedited processing for
131 certifications.

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

134 (a) Develop rules for administering this section.

135 (b) Ensure interagency cooperation for seamless
136 implementation of this section.

137 (9) ANNUAL REPORTING.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs
138 shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the
139 Legislature that includes:

140 (a) The number of veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
141 businesses that were established in this state or that relocated
142 to this state.

143 (b) Economic metrics such as job creation and tax revenue
144 impact from veteran-owned or military spouse-owned businesses.

145 (c) Demographic data for the participating veterans and
146 military spouses.

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