

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA
MILITARY AFFAIRS, SPACE, AND DOMESTIC SECURITY
Senator Altman, Chair
Senator Sachs, Vice Chair

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 18, 2011
TIME: 8:30 —10:30 a.m.
PLACE: *Mallory Horne Committee Room, 37 Senate Office Building*

MEMBERS: Senator Altman, Chair; Senator Sachs, Vice Chair; Senators Bennett, Bullard, Fasano, Jones, Norman, and Storms

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	SB 148 Bullard	Community Redevelopment; Expanding the definition of the term "blighted area" to include land previously used as a military facility, etc. CA 10/04/2011 Favorable MS 10/18/2011 BC	
2	SB 276 Sachs	Special Observances/Purple Heart Day; Designating August 7 of each year as "Purple Heart Day," etc. MS 10/18/2011	
3	Presentation from the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs		
4	Interim Project 2012-133 (Attracting Student Veterans to Science and Engineering Degree Fields) Presentation		
5	Interim Project 2012-134 (Establishing a Campus Compact for Student Veterans and Institutions of Higher Learning) Presentation		
6	Other Related Meeting Documents		

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Community Affairs Committee

BILL: SB 148

INTRODUCER: Senator Bullard

SUBJECT: Community Redevelopment

DATE: October 18, 2011 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Roam	Yeatman	CA	Favorable
2.	Fleming	Carter	MS	Favorable
3.			BC	
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

This bill expands the definition of “blighted area” for purposes of the Community Redevelopment Act to include land previously used as a military facility which is undeveloped and which the Federal government has declared surplus within the preceding 20 years.

This bill substantially amends s. 163.340(8) of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Community Redevelopment Act

Part III of chapter 163, F.S., the Community Redevelopment Act of 1969, authorizes a county or municipality to create community redevelopment areas (CRAs) as a means of redeveloping slums or blighted areas. CRAs are not permitted to levy or collect taxes; however, the local governing body is permitted to establish a community redevelopment trust fund utilizing revenues derived from tax increment financing (TIF). TIF uses the incremental increase in ad valorem tax revenue within a designated redevelopment area to finance redevelopment projects within that area.

As property tax values in the redevelopment area rise above an established base, tax increment revenues are calculated by applying the current millage rate to that increase in value and depositing that amount into a trust fund. This occurs annually as the taxing authority must annually appropriate an amount representing the calculated increment revenues to the redevelopment trust fund. These revenues are used to back bonds issued to finance redevelopment projects. School district revenues are not subject to the tax increment mechanism.

Section 163.355, F.S., prohibits a county or municipality from exercising the powers conferred by the Act until after the governing body has adopted a resolution finding that:

- (1) One or more slum or blighted areas, or one or more areas in which there is a shortage of housing affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly, exist in such county or municipality; and
- (2) The rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of such area or areas, including, if appropriate, the development of housing which residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly, can afford, is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of such county or municipality.

Community Redevelopment Plans and Initiation

Section 163.360(1), F.S., provides:

Community redevelopment in a community redevelopment area shall not be planned or initiated unless the governing body has, by resolution, determined such area to be a slum area, a blighted area, or an area in which there is a shortage of housing affordable to residents of low or moderate income, including the elderly, or a combination thereof, and designated such area as appropriate for community redevelopment.

Section 163.340(8), F.S., defines “blighted area” as follows:

An area in which there are a substantial number of deteriorated, or deteriorating structures, in which conditions, as indicated by government-maintained statistics or other studies, are leading to economic distress or endanger life or property, and in which two or more of the following factors are present:

- (a) Predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities;
- (b) Aggregate assessed values of real property in the area for ad valorem tax purposes have failed to show any appreciable increase over the 5 years prior to the finding of such conditions;
- (c) Faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness;
- (d) Unsanitary or unsafe conditions;
- (e) Deterioration of site or other improvements;
- (f) Inadequate and outdated building density patterns;
- (g) Falling lease rates per square foot of office, commercial, or industrial space compared to the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (h) Tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land;
- (i) Residential and commercial vacancy rates higher in the area than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (j) Incidence of crime in the area higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;

- (k) Fire and emergency medical service calls to the area proportionately higher than in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (l) A greater number of violations of the Florida Building Code in the area than the number of violations recorded in the remainder of the county or municipality;
- (m) Diversity of ownership or defective or unusual conditions of title which prevent the free alienability of land within the deteriorated or hazardous area; or
- (n) Governmentally owned property with adverse environmental conditions caused by a public or private entity.

However, the term “blighted area” also means any area in which at least one of the factors identified in paragraphs (a) through (n) are present and all taxing authorities subject to s. 163.387(2)(a) agree, either by inter-local agreement or agreements with the agency or by resolution, that the area is blighted.

Disposal of Military Real Property

The U. S. Department of Defense (DOD) provides for the disposal of real property “for which there is no foreseeable military requirement, either in peacetime or for mobilization.”¹ Disposal of such property is subject to a number of statutory and department regulations which consider factors such as the:

- Presence of any hazardous material contamination;
- Valuation of property assets;
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
- National Historic Preservation Act;
- Real property mineral rights; and
- Presence of floodplains and wetlands.²

Once the DOD has classified land as excess to their needs, the land is transferred to the Office of Real Property Disposal within the federal General Services Administration (GSA). With general federal surplus lands, GSA has a clear process wherein they first offer the land to other federal agencies. If no other federal agency identifies a need, the land is then labeled “surplus” (rather than “excess”) and available for transfer to state and local governments and certain nonprofit agencies. Uses which benefit the homeless must be given priority, and then the land may be transferred at a discount of up to 100% if it is used for other specific types of public uses which include education, corrections, emergency management, airports, self-help housing, parks and recreation, law enforcement, wildlife conservation, public health, historic monuments, port facilities, and highways. If the public use is not among those public benefits, the GSA may negotiate a sale at appraised fair market value to a state or local government for another public purpose.³

¹ Department of Defense Instruction 4165.72.

² Id.

³ General Services Administration Public Buildings Service, *Acquiring Federal Real Estate for Public Uses* (Sep. 2007), <https://extportal.pbs.gsa.gov/RedinetDocs/cm/rcdocs/Acquiring%20Federal%20Real%20Estate%20for%20Public%20Uses1222988606483.pdf> (last visited Mar. 08, 2011).

The Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) of 1990 provides for an exception to this process in which the Department of Defense (DOD) supersedes the normal surplus process. BRAC is a process by which military facilities are recommended for realignment or closure and approved by the President; the BRAC process has been undertaken in 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005. Surplus disposal authority is delegated to the DOD when BRAC properties are involved. The Secretary of Defense is authorized to work with Local Redevelopment Authorities (LRAs) in determining what to do with surplus BRAC properties. This includes the possibility of transferring BRAC property to an LRA at reduced or no cost for the purpose of economic development, which is not an acceptable public purpose under the general federal surplus process. The Secretary of Defense is responsible for determining what constitutes an LRA and what cost, if any, will be associated with the transfer.⁴

There are four Florida cities which have been affected by BRAC closures, all resulting from the 1993 BRAC process. Homestead Air Force Base was realigned in 1992; Pensacola's Naval Aviation Depot and Fleet and Industrial Supply Center were closed in 1996; Jacksonville's Cecil Field was closed in 1999; and Orlando's Naval Training Center and Naval Hospital were closed in 1999.⁵

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 of the bill expands the current definition of the term "blighted area" provided for in s. 163.340(8), F.S., to include land previously used as a military facility which is undeveloped and which the Federal Government has declared surplus within the preceding 20 years.

Section 2 of the bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2012.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC): Transfer and Disposal of Military Property* (Mar. 31, 2009), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R40476.pdf> (last visited Mar. 14, 2011).

⁵ United States Department of Defense, *Major Base Closure Summary*, <http://www.defense.gov/faq/pis/17.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2011).

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Community redevelopment agencies will be able to develop a community redevelopment plan utilizing the expanded definition of “blighted area” to include land previously used as a military facility which is undeveloped and which the federal government has declared surplus within the preceding 20 years. As a result, these areas may receive TIF revenues under the Community Redevelopment Act, and property values in the area may increase as a result of any improvements using TIF. Redevelopment of these areas can contribute to increased economic interest in a region and an overall improved economic condition.

Counties and municipalities are required by s. 163.345, F.S., to prioritize private enterprise in the rehabilitation and redevelopment of blighted areas. The increase in ad valorem taxation could be used to finance private development projects within this new category of “blighted area.” Overall property values in the surrounding area may also increase as a result, affecting current homeowners’ resale values and ad valorem taxation.

C. Government Sector Impact:

A municipality or county would be able to develop a community redevelopment plan utilizing the expanded definition of “blighted area” to include land previously used as a military facility which is undeveloped and which the federal government has declared surplus within the preceding 20 years. This could result in a portion of the ad valorem taxes from those lands being used for TIF. County and municipal governments would then not directly receive the ad valorem tax revenue on the increase in property value within the CRA, but could see an increase in other aspects of the local economy.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

Miami-Dade County has expressed interest in developing the area around Metrozoo as a recreation destination.⁶ The family entertainment center, as considered in 2004, was projected to bring 9,000 permanent jobs to the area.⁷ Coast Guard property adjacent to current Metrozoo property could be part of this development, and tax increment financing through a CRA could

⁶ Oscar Pedro Musibay, *Plans for Entertainment District Near Miami Metrozoo Progress*, South Florida Business Journal, Sep. 21, 2009, available at <http://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/stories/2009/09/21/story6.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2011).

⁷ Susan Stabley, *Zoo Entertainment Park Planned*, South Florida Business Journal, Dec. 27, 2004, available at <http://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/stories/2004/12/27/story1.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2011).

help finance such improvements. The Richmond Coast Guard Base, which is currently open, is reportedly considering a deal where the county would help them attain a new location while selling the land to private developers who would then build this new development.⁸

VIII. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

⁸ Conversation with Kevin Asher, Special Project Manager, Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation Department (Sept. 19, 2011).

APPEARANCE RECORD

(Deliver to Senator or Senate Professional Staff conducting the meeting)

10/18 /2011

Meeting Date

148

Bill Number (if applicable)

Topic Redevelopment

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

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Job Title TRUSTEE

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Speaking: For Against Information

Representing JUSTICE-2-JESUS

Appearing at request of Chair: Yes No

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: Yes No

While it is a Senate tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this meeting. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard.

For officially noticed committee meetings, pursuant to s. 11.061, Florida Statutes, state, state university, or community college employees are required to file the first copy of this form with the Committee, unless appearance has been requested by the Chair as a witness or for informational purposes.

If designated employee:

Time: from _____ to _____

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (04/19/11)

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee

BILL: SB 276

INTRODUCER: Senator Sachs

SUBJECT: Special Observances/Purple Heart Day

DATE: October 18, 2011 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Fleming	Carter	MS	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill creates s. 683.146, F.S., to designate August 7 of each year as “Purple Heart Day” and authorizes the Governor to annually issue a proclamation designating August 7 as “Purple Heart Day.” This bill also encourages public officials, schools, private organizations, and all residents of Florida to commemorate “Purple Heart Day” and honor those who have been wounded or killed while serving in any branch of the United States Armed Forces.

This bill creates section 683.146 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Legal Holidays and Special Observance Days

Chapter 683, F.S., establishes legal holidays and special observance days. Legal holidays and special observance days may apply throughout the state or they may be limited to particular counties. For example, “Gasparilla Day”¹ is a legal holiday observed only in Hillsborough County while “Bill of Rights Day,”² if issued by the Governor, is observed throughout the entire state. The legal holidays established in s. 683.01(1), F.S., are:

- (a) Sunday, the first day of each week.
- (b) New Year’s Day, January 1.
- (c) Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., January 15.
- (d) Birthday of Robert E. Lee, January 19.
- (e) Lincoln’s Birthday, February 12.

¹ Section 683.08, F.S.

² Section 683.25, F.S.

- (f) Susan B. Anthony's Birthday, February 15.
- (g) Washington's Birthday, the third Monday in February.
- (h) Good Friday.
- (i) Pascua Florida Day, April 2.
- (j) Confederate Memorial Day, April 26.
- (k) Memorial Day, the last Monday in May.
- (l) Birthday of Jefferson Davis, June 3.
- (m) Flag Day, June 14.
- (n) Independence Day, July 4.
- (o) Labor Day, the first Monday in September.
- (p) Columbus Day and Farmers' Day, the second Monday in October.
- (q) Veterans' Day, November 11.
- (r) General Election Day.
- (s) Thanksgiving Day, the fourth Thursday in November.
- (t) Christmas Day, December 25.
- (u) Shrove Tuesday, sometimes also known as "Mardi Gras," in counties where carnival associations are organized for the purpose of celebrating the same.

Designation of a day as a legal holiday does not necessarily make that day a paid holiday for public employees. Section 110.117, F.S., establishes the legal holidays that are paid holidays for public employees.³

In addition to legal holidays, Chapter 683, F.S., recognizes the following special observances: Arbor Day; Pan-American Day; Pascua Florida Day; Gasparilla Day; DeSoto Day; Grandparents' and Family Caregivers' Day; Law Enforcement Appreciation Month; Law Enforcement Memorial Day; Parade Day; State Observance of National Day of Mourning; Patriots' Day; I Am An American Day; Teachers' Day; Retired Teachers' Day; Parents' and Children's Day; Save the Florida Panther Day; Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday; Florida Jewish History Month; Juneteenth Day; Law Day and Law Week; Florida Missing Children's Day; Florida Alzheimer's Disease Day; Bill of Rights Day; Ronald Reagan Day; Homeless Persons' Memorial Day; Three Kings Day; Child Welfare Professionals Recognition Day; and Ronshay Dugan's Act.⁴

The Purple Heart

The Purple Heart,⁵ originally awarded exclusively for meritorious service, is the nation's oldest military award which was first introduced as the "Badge of Military Merit" by General George Washington on August 7, 1782, during the Revolutionary War.⁶ This award was ignored for nearly 150 years before it was re-established per General Order No. 3, on February 22, 1932, in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth.

³ "Legal holidays" are not necessarily the same as "paid holidays" for governmental employees. Section 110.117(1), F.S., provides the following holidays as paid holidays for all state branches and agencies: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King Birthday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Veteran's Day; Thanksgiving Day and Friday after Thanksgiving; and Christmas Day.

⁴ Sections 683.04 – 683.332, F.S.

⁵ For more information on the Purple Heart, see: http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/purple_heart.aspx.

⁶ Paragraph 2-8, Army Regulation 600-8-22. Available at: http://www.apd.army.mil/pdf/files/r600_8_22.pdf.

Current eligibility and conditions for the award of the Purple Heart are defined in Army Regulations 600-8-22, which provides that the Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of the U.S. Armed Forces who, while serving under component authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after April 5, 1917, has been wounded or killed, or who has died or may hereafter die after being wounded:⁷

- (1) In any action against an enemy of the US.
- (2) In any action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the US are or have been engaged.
- (3) While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the US is not a belligerent party.
- (4) As a result of an act of any such enemy of opposing armed forces.
- (5) As the result of an act of any hostile foreign force.
- (6) After March 28, 1973, as a result of an international terrorist attack against the UIS or a foreign nation friendly to the US, recognized as such an attack by the Secretary of the Army, or jointly by the Secretaries of the separate armed services concerned if person from more than one service are wounded in the attack.
- (7) After March 28, 1972, as a result of military operations while serving outside the territory of the US as part of the peacekeeping force.

The Purple Heart is ranked immediately behind the Bronze Star Medal⁸ and ahead of the Defense Meritorious Service Medal⁹ in order of precedence,¹⁰ however it is generally acknowledged to be among the most aesthetically pleasing of American awards and decorations.¹¹ The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor estimates that there have been 1.7 million Purple Hearts awarded.¹²

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 of the bill creates s. 683.146, F.S. to designate August 7 of each year as “Purple Heart Day” and authorizes the Governor to annually issue a proclamation designating August 7 as “Purple Heart Day.” This bill also encourages public officials, schools, private organizations, and all residents of Florida to commemorate “Purple Heart Day” and honor those who have been wounded or killed while serving in any branch of the United States Armed Forces.

⁷ Id.

⁸ The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to a person in any branch of the military service who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States on or after December 7, 1941, has distinguished himself or herself by heroic or meritorious achievement or service, not involving participation in aerial flight, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy. For more information, see: http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/bronze_star.aspx.

⁹ The Defense Meritorious Service Medal is awarded to in the name of the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who, after 3 November 1977, distinguished themselves by noncombat meritorious achievement or service. For more information, see: http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/defense_meritorious.aspx.

¹⁰ http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/order_of_precedence.aspx

¹¹ U.S. Army Center of Military History website. *The Badge of Military Merit / The Purple Heart*. Available at: <http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/purhrt.html>.

¹² The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor website. *Frequently Asked Questions*. Available at: <http://www.thepurpleheart.com/faqs/>.

Section 2 of the bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2012.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill does not require that local governments issue a proclamation. Issuance of the proclamation by the Governor may give rise to some costs, though it is likely *de minimus*.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

THE FLORIDA SENATE
APPEARANCE RECORD

(Deliver to Senator or Senate Professional Staff conducting the meeting)

10 18 /2011

Meeting Date

276

Bill Number (if applicable)

Topic observances

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name BRIAN PITTS

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Speaking: For Against Information

Representing JUSTICE-2-JESUS

Appearing at request of Chair: Yes No

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: Yes No

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If designated employee:

Time: from _____ to _____

This form is part of the public record for this meeting.

S-001 (04/19/11)



Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

Mike Prendergast
Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired
Executive Director



Mission



Veterans' Advocacy

Help Florida veterans, their families and survivors to improve their health and economic well-being through quality advocacy regarding benefit information, education and long-term health care services.



Statutory Responsibilities



- **Provide Information and Advocacy**
(Benefits and Assistance)

The Division of Benefits and Assistance (B&A) provides professional assistance to all Florida veterans and their dependents in their efforts in preparing claims for and securing financial benefits, medical treatment, career training, and other benefits or privileges to which they are entitled under federal or state law or regulation by reason of their military service. All services provided by B&A are without charge to the claimant. (Chapter 292, Florida Statutes)





Statutory Responsibilities

- **Quality Long-Term Health Care Services to Florida Veterans (*Homes Program*)**

The State Veterans' Homes Program provides comprehensive, high-quality health care on a cost-effective basis to eligible veterans who are in need of assisted living or long-term care in a skilled nursing facility. (Chapter 296, Florida Statutes)





Veterans' Facts

- **Nation's 3rd largest Veteran population**
 - More than 1.6 million Floridians are Veterans
 - 12 percent of state's population 18 years & over
- **Florida's Veterans are a major fiscal force**
 - \$12 Billion Federal dollars for Veterans flow annually into Florida's economy
- **Florida's Veterans are a diverse group**
 - Largest population of World War II vets in nation
 - Over 200,000 are Iraq & Afghanistan vets
 - 12 percent of Florida's vets are female



How We Serve

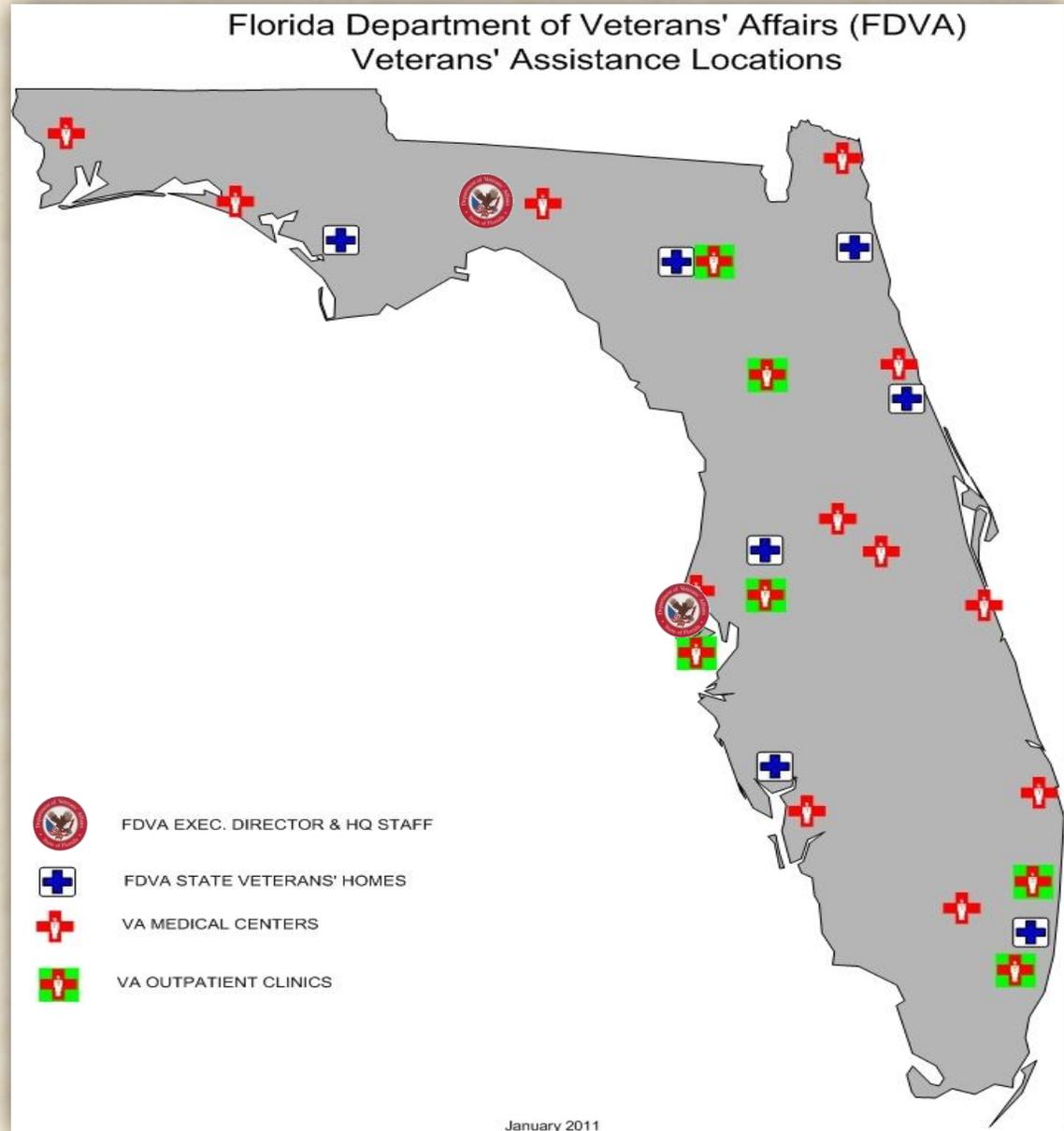
- **Veterans' Benefits & Assistance**
- **Long-Term Health Care Services**
- **Legislative Advocacy**





FDVA Footprint

- **6 Veterans' Nursing Homes**
- **1 Domiciliary (ALF)**
- **22 field offices staffed with Claims Examiners**
- **3 division headquarters**



January 2011



Benefits & Assistance Division

- **Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services**
 - Assists in preparation, submission & prosecution of claims & appeals for state & federal entitlements
 - Partners with Bay Pines VA Regional Office to expedite veterans' claims & influence positive outcome
- **Bureau of Veterans' Field Services**
 - Provides face-to-face benefits counseling & claims services at locations throughout state
- **Bureau of State Approving for Veterans' Training**
 - 100% Federally funded program reviews, evaluates & approves Veterans' education programs & training



County Veteran Service Offices

- Local assistance available through network of County Veteran Service Offices
- FDVA trains and certifies staff
- Services provided at no cost to veteran or their family members





State Veterans' Homes



- **Robert Jenkins Domiciliary (Lake City) 1990**
- **Emory Bennett SVNH (Daytona Beach) 1993**
- **Baldomero Lopez SVNH (Land O' Lakes) 1999**
- **Sandy Ninger SVNH (Pembroke Pines) 2001**
- **Clifford Sims SVNH (Springfield) 2003**
- **Douglas Jacobson SVNH (Port Charlotte) 2004**
- **Clyde Lassen SVNH (St. Augustine) 2010**

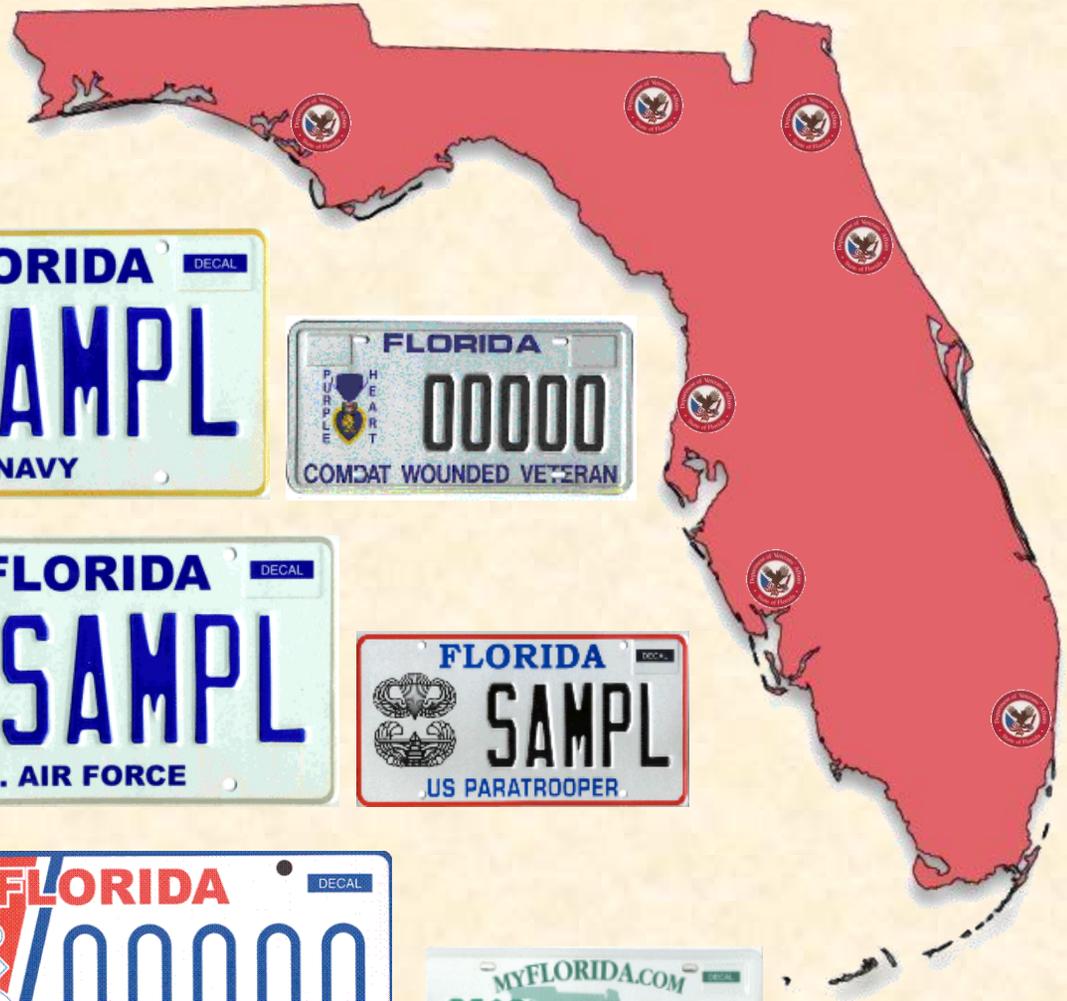


Funding for State Veterans' Homes

- **Construction & Renovation Reimbursement Sources:**
 - 65% Federal VA funding
 - 35% State of Florida matching funds
- **Resident Care Reimbursement Sources:**
 - Resident care funded by VA if service-connected disability is 70% or greater
 - VA Per Diem
 - Private pay
 - Third-Party Insurance
 - Medicare
 - Medicaid



Plate Sales Support State Veterans' Homes





Return on Investment Benefits and Assistance



ROI - FYE 6-30-11 *(July 2010 – June 2011)*

VA Benefits	\$ 368,154,897
Retroactive Benefits	211,926,471
Debt Waiver	666,769
Issue Resolution	<u>48,407,864</u>
Total	<u>\$ 629,156,001</u>
B&A Total Expenses paid:	<u>\$ 4,309,288</u>

ROI = \$ 146 : \$1

Every federal dollar that B&A staff garners from advocacy on behalf of Florida's veterans is a dollar added to Florida's economy. Every health care or educational dollar provided by the federal VA **potentially** frees a state dollar that can be used to assist other citizens.



Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

www.FloridaVets.org

THE FLORIDA SENATE

COMMITTEE APPEARANCE RECORD

(Submit to Committee Chair or Administrative Assistant)

10/18/11

Date

Bill Number

Barcode

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Speaking: For Against Information

Appearing at request of Chair

Subject Department Overview

Representing Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: Yes No

Pursuant to s. 11.061, Florida Statutes, state, state university, or community college employees are required to file the first copy of this form with the Committee, unless appearance has been requested by the Chair as a witness or for informational purposes.

If designated employee: Time: from .m. to .m.



The Florida Senate

Interim Report 2012-133

September 2011

Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

ATTRACTING STUDENT VETERANS TO SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING DEGREE FIELDS

Issue Description

There is a rising national concern about future challenges and a potential shortage in the U.S. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workforce, which is suggested to be attributed to the downward trend in student interest in STEM disciplines and the impending retirement of a large number of engineers and scientists during the coming decade. In an effort to mitigate this potential shortage, servicemembers leaving the military have been identified as a potential source of highly motivated, skilled talent that can help address the decline of the technical workforce. A great opportunity exists to tap into the veteran population to encourage veterans to utilize their GI Bill benefits to pursue postsecondary degrees in STEM fields and build upon the technical skill sets gained through intensive military training and experience.

Background

There is widespread agreement that STEM disciplines have become increasingly central to U.S. economic competitiveness and growth.¹ “Today, much of everyday life in the United States and other industrialized nations, as evidenced in transportation, communication, agriculture, education, health, defense, and jobs, is a product of investments in research and in the education of scientists and engineers.”² Therefore, it is imperative that the U.S. maintain a strong quality STEM workforce to enhance scientific innovation and remain globally competitive.³

However, just as there is broad consensus on the significance of STEM disciplines, there is at the same time a national concern about an impending shortage in the U.S. STEM workforce which may impede the abilities of the U.S. to compete in this global economy. Although there are arguments questioning the legitimacy of this claim,⁴ federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) express serious concerns about the future vitality of the U.S. STEM workforce. The NSF maintains that reduced domestic student interest in STEM fields and the large segment of the existing STEM workforce approaching retirement age may threaten America’s long-term prosperity and national security.⁵

The DOL calls for a nation-wide collaborative effort across all levels of government, key businesses and non-governmental institutions to address what DOL refers to as the “STEM workforce challenge.”⁶ In addition, DOL has identified the following trends relating to academic preparation for STEM success:

¹ U.S. Department of Labor. *The STEM Workforce Challenge: the Role of the Public Workforce System in a National Solution for a Competitive Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Workforce* (April 2007), 1. http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/pdf/STEM_Report_4%2007.pdf

² The National Academies. *Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future* (Washington, DC, 2007), 41, citing to S.W. Popper and C.S. Wagner. *New Foundations for Growth: The U.S. Innovation System Today and Tomorrow* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002).

³ U.S. Department of Labor. *The STEM Workforce Challenge*, 1.

⁴ See, for example, B. Lindsay Lowell and Hal Salzman, “Into the Eye of the Storm: Assessing the Evidence on Science and Engineering Education, Quality, and Workforce Demand” (The Urban Institute, Washington, DC, October 2007). http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411562_Salzman_Science.pdf

⁵ National Science Board. *The Science and Engineering Workforce; Realizing America’s Potential*, (August 2003), 7. <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents/2003/nsb0369/>

⁶ U.S. Department of Labor. *The STEM Workforce Challenge*, 4.

- Many students are not academically qualified to pursue STEM disciplines due to inadequate preparation in math and science or poor teacher quality in K-12 systems;
- Academically qualified postsecondary students are dissuaded from pursuing STEM disciplines due to high tuition or demanding curricula, relatively low salaries in STEM fields compared to other professions, or the absence of role models with whom they can identify; and
- There is low engagement of minority, female, and lower-income students in STEM-related learning, who comprise a growing proportion of the total college-going population.⁷

STEMflorida,⁸ a statewide council established in 2009 by Workforce Florida, Inc. and Enterprise Florida, Inc. to diagnose the needs of STEM-enabled employers and improve the skills of Florida's STEM workforce,⁹ observed that "Florida ranks below most other states in terms of the number of STEM professionals in the workforce, lagging behind states with the largest economies."¹⁰ The most recent data reveals that 2.69% of Florida's workforce is employed in science and engineering occupations, which is lower than the 3.75% national average. Additionally, the average proportion of the science and engineering workforce in the three largest U.S. economies, California, New York, and Texas is 3.88%.¹¹

Findings and/or Conclusions

Veterans as a Resource to Offset Potential STEM Workforce Shortage

The NSF has identified the post-9/11 veteran¹² population as a "diverse and qualified pool of future talent for the nation's engineering and science employers," and has spearheaded a movement to spread awareness and to assist academic institutions in developing "programs that will usher post-9/11 veterans into technical fields and shape them into workforce-ready engineers and scientists."¹³ Tapping into this skilled and experienced population could prove to be mutually beneficial to both the strength of the U.S. STEM workforce and the post-military success of the targeted veteran population.

This opportunity to encourage veterans to pursue science and engineering degrees is supported by the notion that the skills obtained from military instruction and experience are especially transferable to the technical industries of science and engineering. One study suggests that the significant investment of the U.S. taxpayers in training the U.S. military personnel could prove to have a transformative effect on the U.S. economy with the transition of veterans into technical careers.¹⁴

To further explore this emerging initiative, the NSF hosted a 2009 workshop entitled *Enhancing the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Benefit*, which specifically addressed issues relating to encouraging post-9/11 veterans to utilize their educational benefits to pursue degrees in the fields of science and engineering.¹⁵ Subsequently, the NSF awarded research grants to 17 higher education institutions across the nation to develop programs and services aimed at easing the transition of military veterans into science and engineering disciplines.¹⁶

⁷ U.S. Department of Labor. *The STEM Workforce Challenge*, 2.

⁸ STEMflorida homepage: <http://www.stemflorida.net/>

⁹ STEMflorida is funded from a one-time \$580,000 grant from the Board of Workforce Florida, Inc.

¹⁰ STEMflorida. *A Snapshot: The State of STEM in Florida* (January 2010), 44.

http://www.helios.org/uploads/docs/StateofSTEM_Final.pdf

¹¹ National Science Board. 2010. *Science and Engineering Indicators 2010*. Arlington, VA:

National Science Foundation (NSB 10-01). <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind10/pdfstart.htm>

¹² A military servicemember who served in the U.S. armed forces for any period of time after September 10, 2001 is typically referred to as a "post-9/11 veteran."

¹³ National Science Foundation. *Veterans' Education for Engineering and Science*. (Washington, DC, April 2009), 6.

<http://www.nsf.gov/eng/eec/VeteranEducation.pdf>

¹⁴ Steinberg, L.J., Zoli, C., and Armstrong, N.J. *From Battlefield to Classroom: Findings, Barriers, and Pathways to Engineering for U.S. Servicemembers* (Syracuse University, 2011), 9.

¹⁵ National Science Foundation. *Veterans' Education for Engineering and Science*.

¹⁶ The following academic institutions received a grant from the NSF for Veteran's Education Projects: Georgia Institute of Technology; Virginia Commonwealth University; San Diego State University; University of San Diego; Syracuse University; University of Virginia; Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Mississippi State University; Pennsylvania State

While each of the 17 NSF-funded research grants has a unique objective, they all share the common theme pertaining to student veterans pursuing science and engineering degrees. Examples of the objectives of three of the grant recipients include the following:

- Virginia Commonwealth University will design a system to efficiently and appropriately match military credits and/or occupational experience to engineering course credits at the university level;¹⁷
- Norfolk State University will create a partnership with local community colleges to pilot the establishment of an innovative program to leverage the community college pathway into the engineering profession; and
- University of Pittsburgh will create a program that targets the enrollment and retention of wounded, injured, and ill veterans in engineering programs.

Many of the NSF-sponsored research projects are still a work-in-progress, in which there are no results to report. However, some grant recipients are beginning to expose initial findings and announce plans for upcoming programs. For example, Eastern Washington University (EWU) received a \$150,000 NSF award in October 2010 to develop a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering degree program specifically designed for military veterans. EWU recently went live with a website¹⁸ that introduces the program and announces that the program will commence in spring 2012 with approximately 15 students.

Other Non-NSF Sponsored Veterans to STEM Degree Initiatives

Like the NSF, Tennessee Valley Corridor, Inc. (TVC)¹⁹ has also recognized an opportunity to capitalize on the maturity, technical training, and hands-on experience of veterans to help fill the STEM workforce gap and keep the nation technically competitive. To that end, TVC established the “Vets to the Valley” initiative,²⁰ which consists of the “America’s Veterans to Tennessee Engineers” program and the Non-Traditional Emerging Workforce in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (NEW-STEM) program. These two programs seek to attract military veterans to STEM degree fields and successfully transition them into the STEM workforce.

*America’s Veterans to Tennessee Engineers*²¹

The University of Tennessee System and other participating universities and community colleges have entered into a memorandum of agreement with corporations and other supporting organizations to support the America’s Veterans to Tennessee Engineers program. This program provides an opportunity for military service members to complete an engineering degree in Tennessee, and upon graduation, attain employment with one of Tennessee’s leading companies. This program specifically targets active duty military members who are completing their military service, or military reservists, who desire a career as a nuclear, chemical, mechanical, civil, or electrical engineer. Students selected for this program are provided assistance in attaining part-time employment or internships, receive support from community sponsors and academic mentors, and are guaranteed a job upon graduation.

University; Norfolk State University; University of Pittsburgh; Eastern Washington University; Kansas State University; University of Kentucky; Flathead Valley Community College; Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University; and University of Washington.

¹⁷ American Society for Engineering Education, 2011 Conference.

¹⁸ EWU Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering website: <http://www.ewu.edu/CSHE/Programs/VEEI.xml>

¹⁹ The Tennessee Valley Corridor, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(6) regional economic development organization with representation from the following states: Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

²⁰ The Tennessee Valley Corridor. Vets to the Valley Initiative homepage: <http://www.tennvalleycorridor.org/ventures/new-stem/opportunity.html>.

²¹ America’s Veterans to Tennessee Engineers program homepage: <http://www.y12.doe.gov/jobs/stem/>

*NEW-STEM*²²

NEW-STEM targets newly-separating or recently retired servicemembers who have training, experience, or previous coursework in engineering, mathematics, or science to pursue a technical degree the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama. While pursuing their degrees, NEW-STEM students participate in a paid internship program offered by a participating private sector company or federal agency located in the Huntsville area. Upon graduation, participants receive priority consideration for a full-time position with the organization they interned with during their schooling.

The New Post-9/11 GI Bill Offers Greater Benefits than Previous GI Bill Programs

When it comes to student financing for higher education, veterans are at an advantage compared to traditional college students, due to the exceptional financial assistance available to veterans from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Since the enactment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights (GI Bill), the Federal government has demonstrated its commitment in supporting the pursuit of higher education for veterans.

The original GI Bill has been updated twice—once in 1984, which came to be known as the “Montgomery GI Bill” and finally, more recently in June 2008 when Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, otherwise known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, offers an unprecedented level of educational benefits to nearly 2 million individuals who have served in the U.S. armed forces since the attacks of September 11, 2001.²³

Individuals with active duty service after September 10, 2001 who serve a period of 90 aggregate days or serve a period of 30 days and receive a disability discharge are eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits,²⁴ which include the following:

- Tuition and fees²⁵
- Monthly Housing Allowance²⁶
- Books and Supplies Stipend²⁷
- Yellow Ribbon Program²⁸
- Rural Benefit
- Licensing and Certification Tests

Since implementation, the Department of Veterans Affairs has provided just over \$5.7 billion for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to fund education expenses for about 381,000 veterans, service members, and their dependents through fiscal year 2010, and estimates it will provide almost \$8 billion in fiscal year 2011.²⁹

²² NEW-STEM flyer: http://www.tennvalleycorridor.org/library/cms/File/APS-11%20N-S%20Flyer%20Rev%2015%20FINAL_Nov%2012%202009.pdf

²³ RAND Corporation. Research Brief. *How Military Veterans Are Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Adapting to Life in College* (2010). http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9560.html

²⁴ Individuals are eligible while on active duty after serving a period of 90 days.

²⁵ Individuals are eligible for the lesser of the following: actual tuition and fees charged; or tuition and fees charged for full-time undergraduate training at the most expensive public institution of higher learning in the state where the student is enrolled.

²⁶ Monthly housing allowance is issued directly to the student, is equivalent to the Basic Allowance for Housing for an E-5 with dependents, and is determined by the zip code of the school where the student is enrolled.

²⁷ Individuals may receive a book and supplies stipend of up to \$1,000 per academic year.

²⁸ The Yellow Ribbon Program allows institutions of higher learning in the U.S. to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition and fee rate in their state.

²⁹ U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Veterans' Education Benefits: Enhanced Guidance and Collaboration Could Improve Administration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Program* (May 5, 2011), 1. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d11356r.pdf>

Florida Supports a High Veteran and Military Presence

Florida has a substantial presence of military personnel and veterans as the home to 20 major military installations, 58,000 active duty military personnel, and almost 12,000 Florida National Guard members. Additionally, Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation with more than 1.6 million, behind California and Texas.³⁰

In addition to supporting the third largest veteran population in the nation, Florida has a substantial presence of post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans. The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) estimates that approximately 192,000 servicemembers and veterans who have served during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation New Dawn claim Florida as their home of record.³¹

Figure one illustrates the age ranges of veterans who reside in Florida, in which the age range of 60-64 years of age has the highest concentrated veteran presence with 213,877. It is important to note that there are almost 127,000 veterans who fall within the age range of 18-34. Although this chart does not offer higher education attainment data, it is, however, obvious that there is a large concentration of “college age” veterans who may be interested in pursuing higher education, either at the undergraduate or the graduate level.

FIGURE ONE TOTAL VETERANS IN FLORIDA BY AGE GROUP ³²				
AGE	# VETERANS		AGE	# VETERANS
<20	407		55-59	137,016
20-24	18,036		60-64	213,877
25-29	49,367		65-69	167,944
30-34	59,167		70-74	141,294
35-39	68,960		75-79	154,120
40-44	99,812		80-84	134,732
45-49	130,094		85-89	92,570
50-54	144,286		90+	39,196

As the fourth largest state in the nation, Florida offers a broad range of opportunities for those pursuing higher education, with 39 public colleges and universities and 29 private, not-for-profit colleges and universities. Consequently, veterans interested in utilizing their GI Bill benefits have a vast selection in deciding on an institution to attend in Florida.

Figure two illustrates the number of student veterans who attended a State University System of Florida (SUS) institution for the 2010 summer and fall semesters.³³ The University of West Florida, the University of Central Florida, the University of North Florida, the University of South Florida, and Florida State University reported the highest concentration of student veterans within the SUS at the time the data was recorded. Additionally, it is important to note that during the 2010-11 academic year approximately 36% of student veterans receiving GI Bill benefits were enrolled in science and engineering degree programs within the SUS, and 64% were enrolled in non-science and engineering degree programs.³⁴

³⁰ Florida Department of Veteran Affairs. *2010 Annual Report*, 6. http://www.floridavets.org/pdf/ann_rprt_10.pdf

³¹ Id.

³² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Table 1L: *Veterans by State, Age Group, Period, Gender, 2000-2036*. NOTE: These are projected estimates based on 2007 data.

³³ E-mail correspondence with SUS staff. June 27, 2011.

³⁴ E-mail correspondence with SUS staff. August 16, 2011.

FIGURE TWO				
VETERAN POPULATION IN STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM				
INSTITUTION	UNDERGRAD	GRADUATE	UNCLASSIFIED	TOTAL
FAMU	13	4	-	17
FAU	433	53	14	500
FGCU	154	16	8	178
FIU	606	145	13	764
FSU	927	254	40	1,221
NCF	2	-	-	2
UCF	1,071	169	11	1,251
UF	376	349	21	746
UNF	936	99	7	1,042
USF	1,326	242	41	1,609
UWF	702	212	73	987
TOTAL	<u>6,546</u>	<u>1,543</u>	<u>228</u>	<u>8,317</u>

Florida Colleges and Universities Expressly Interested in Attracting Veterans to STEM Fields

While there are no current efforts at Florida institutions within the SUS, the Florida College System, or the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida which focus specifically on attracting veterans to STEM disciplines, representatives from the institutions expressed significant interest in further exploring the initiative.³⁵

Some institutions support existing STEM outreach programs which could be expanded to specifically target veterans, and some STEM outreach programs already include veterans as part of the outreach target population. For example, Daytona State College has established *STEP* (Science and Technology Enhancement Program), a program which encourages more non-traditional students to participate in STEM disciplines. According to Daytona State College staff, STEP does not specifically target military veterans, however, veterans are included in the non-traditional student population that the program targets.³⁶

Additionally, there is some concern among institutions about the challenges associated with identifying veterans in a college or university, making it difficult to target veterans to inform them of STEM opportunities.

Options and/or Recommendations

Increasing the number of scientists and engineers in the U.S. will address the problem of the loss of a significant workforce and its negative impact on the long term prosperity and national security. Veterans are an ideal pool of students to populate the colleges and universities in the STEM fields. Florida, with its significant veteran population, is ideally suited to educate this much needed workforce through its State University System's 11 universities. Attracting student veterans to science and engineering degree fields will provide significant employment for the returning veterans during this time of economic crisis.

Based on the foregoing information, the Legislature has the following options:

- Encourage the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to coordinate with the SUS and the Florida College System to create a systematic approach to identify veterans or departing servicemembers who may be qualified or interested in pursuing a STEM discipline;
- Encourage higher education institutions in Florida to establish a position at each institution which would be responsible for STEM outreach services targeting veterans;
- Launch a statewide awareness campaign to educate veterans on their potential for success in STEM career fields; and

³⁵ Although as a whole the respondents reported that there are no specific efforts in attracting veterans to STEM disciplines, many did however make reference to other ongoing initiatives targeting student veterans at Florida colleges and universities.

³⁶ E-mail correspondence with Daytona State College staff. August 2, 2011.

- Encourage government, universities and colleges, and industry to form partnerships and create collaborative programs to attract veterans to STEM degree fields, ensure academic success during STEM studies, and provide assistance in obtaining internships and full-time employment upon graduation.



The Florida Senate

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Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

ESTABLISHING A CAMPUS COMPACT FOR STUDENT VETERANS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

Issue Description

Florida has both a large population of resident veterans and a large number of returning veterans. With so many veterans living in Florida and more returning home from the military conflicts, there is a need to study the feasibility of the need to improve on-campus services at higher education institutions for the veterans of Florida.

The State of Maryland has established a Campus Compact for Student Veterans with 21 of its community colleges and four-year public universities to improve on-campus services for veterans. The Compact calls on Maryland's higher education community to do more for the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and seeks to ensure educational success of veterans who choose to return to a Maryland school through greater awareness and understanding of the unique challenges student veterans face.

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs is testing a program called "VetSuccess on Campus" at eight colleges, including the University of South Florida (USF), offering personalized assistance to every veteran on campus. USF was the first college to get a full-time VA-funded VetSuccess representative on campus. It hopes to add more in 2012.

Such programs may provide models of opportunities in which higher education institutions in Florida can create an easier transition of veterans from combat to successfully complete their education and re-integrate into the society as productive citizens.

Background

Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation, with over 1.7 million veterans. During the first week of December 2010, Florida had over 2,400 members of the 53rd Infantry Combat Team return home from Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn. There are currently 868 members of Florida's military serving in action in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other far flung places throughout the globe. With so many veterans living in Florida and more returning home from military conflicts, there is a need to improve on-campus services at higher education institutions for the veterans of Florida.

It is likely there will be an increasing number of veterans going to postsecondary schools, and likely that many of those returning to or serving in Florida¹ will go to school here. There are at least three reasons for this: enhanced federal funding for education, the significance of educational benefits as a primary motivation for joining the military,² and the significance of location of the school in selecting a postsecondary school³.

¹ Florida is also home to 20 military bases and 58,000 active duty military members.

² A recent report that examined the motivation to join the service stated that the promise of educational benefits was a primary motivator. Transitions: Combat Veterans as College Students, available at <http://www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/ch1.pdf> (retrieved August 3, 2011), p. 5

³ According to a 2009 study by the American Council of Education, location of the school was the most important reason for choosing a particular educational institution for military undergraduates. Military Service and Veterans in Higher Education: What the New GI Bill May Mean for Postsecondary Institutions available at <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/CPA/Publications/MilService.errata.pdf> (retrieved July 29, 2011), p. 5

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides significantly more benefits than either the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty or the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. A servicemember must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

As of August 1, 2009, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is effective for training. Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, and vocational/technical training. All training programs must be offered by an institution of higher learning (IHL) and approved for GI Bill benefits. Additionally, tutorial assistance, and licensing and certification test reimbursement are approved under the Post- 9/11 GI Bill.

The Post 9-11 GI Bill will pay eligible individuals:

- Full tuition and fees directly to the school for all public school in-state students. For those attending private or foreign schools tuition and fees are capped at \$17,500 per academic year.
- A monthly housing allowance (MHA) based on the Basic Allowance for Housing for an E-5 with dependents at the location of the school. For those enrolled solely in distance learning the housing allowance payable is equal to ½ the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents (\$673.50 for the 2011 academic year). For those attending foreign schools (schools without a main campus in the U.S.) the BAH rate is fixed at \$1,347.00 for the 2011 academic year. Active duty students & their spouses cannot receive the MHA.
- An annual books & supplies stipend of \$1,000 paid proportionately based on enrollment.

This benefit provides up to 36 months of education benefits, generally benefits are payable for 15 years following release from active duty. The Post-9/11 GI Bill also offers some service members the opportunity to transfer their GI Bill to dependents.⁴

Under the Yellow Ribbon Program, initially, the Post-9/11 GI Bill paid up to the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition and fees. Effective August 1, 2011 the Post-9/11 GI Bill will pay:

- All public school in-state tuition and fees or
- Up to \$17,500 per academic year for a private school.

Tuition and fees may exceed these amounts for servicemembers attending a private school or are attending a public school as a nonresident student.

Institutions of Higher Learning (Degree Granting Institutions) may elect to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program to make additional funds available (veteran) for your education programs without an additional charge to the GI Bill entitlement. Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with VA choose the amount of tuition and fees that will be contributed. VA will match that amount and issue payment directly to the institution.

Only veterans entitled to the maximum benefit rate (based on service requirements) or their designated transferees may receive this funding. Active duty servicemembers and their spouses are not eligible for this program (child transferees of active duty servicemembers may be eligible if the servicemember is qualified at the 100% rate).

Schools that intend to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program establish application procedures for eligible students. The school will determine the maximum number of students that may participate in the program and the percent of tuition that will be contributed. VA is currently accepting agreements from institutions for participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

To receive benefits under the Yellow Ribbon Program, the servicemember:

- Must be eligible for the maximum benefit rate under the Post-9/11 GI Bill;
- Must not be on active duty or a spouse transferee of an active duty member

To receive benefits under the Yellow Ribbon Program, the servicemember's school:

- Must agree to participate in the Yellow Program;

⁴ http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/index.html (retrieved July 29, 2011)

- Must have not offered Yellow Ribbon to more than the maximum number of individuals stated in their participation agreement;
- Must certify a servicemember's enrollment to VA, including Yellow Ribbon program information.⁵

In November 2010, the RAND Corporation performed a study entitled *Service Members in School Military Veterans' Experiences Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Pursuing Postsecondary Education* ("RAND Study"). The RAND study dealt with the experience of military veterans and their families using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and pursuing education in colleges and universities. It involved the collection of focus group data from student veterans and other GI Bill beneficiaries—including active-duty service members and eligible dependents—on four or five campuses in each of three states that were home to large numbers of veterans: Arizona, Ohio, and Virginia.⁶

The study sought to evaluate the differences in two-year and four-year, public and private, and for profit and nonprofit institutions in each state by using focus groups. Additionally, to broaden the pool of GI Bill eligible students, the RAND Study also conducted an online geographically diverse survey of 564 current and former service members and dependents. Part of their findings showed that, for both the survey group and the focus group participants, using the Post-9/11 GI Bill provided some positive benefits and presented some challenges.

Benefits and Positive Features from using the Post-9/11 GI Bill

- Living Allowance is a Major Draw of the New GI Bill
"In fact, across all institution types, the living allowance was cited as the Post-9/11 GI Bill's most important improvement over the MGIB."⁷
- The Yellow Ribbon Program Expands But May Not Drive Institutional Choices
"Focus group participants at not only private but also public institutions said they appreciated the existence of the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program."⁸
- Other GI Bill Features Are Also Popular
 - The book stipend for each term (it pays up to \$1,000 per year for students taking at least 24 credit hours per year).⁹
 - Tuition is paid directly to the institution (no out of pocket expenses for the students).¹⁰
- Students appreciated that they no longer had to "call the VA or use the online Web Automated Verification of Enrollment (WAVE) system to confirm their enrollment each month."¹¹

Challenges Presented from the Early Implementation of the New Post-9/11 GI Bill

- Keeping Track of GI Bill Benefits is a Widespread Challenge
"Students mentioned in all 13 focus groups the difficulty of keeping track of their Post-9/11 GI Bill payments."¹²
- Late Payments Have Caused Financial Hardships for Some
"Many focus group participants reported that their Post-9/11 payments were delayed by several months in the first semester of Post-9/11 GI Bill implementation."¹³
- Late Payments Affected Enrollment Status at Some Public Institutions
"In September 2009, the VA had instructed institutions not to penalize students for late Post-9/11 GI Bill tuition payments. However, focus group participants reported that mistakes were sometimes made."¹⁴

⁵ http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/yellow_ribbon_program.html (retrieved July 29, 2011)

⁶ *Service Members in School Military Veterans' Experiences Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Pursuing Postsecondary Education*, available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1083.pdf (retrieved July 29, 2011), p. 19

⁷ *Id.*, 17-18.

⁸ *Id.*, 18.

⁹ *Id.*, 19.

¹⁰ *Id.*, 19-20.

¹¹ *Id.*, 20.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*, 21.

¹⁴ *Id.*, 23

- **Overpayments Presented an Additional Challenge**
“As the VA worked to keep up with education benefit claims, errors in the form of overpayments sometimes occurred. Such overpayments may have been, in some cases, exacerbated by institutions’ confusion with the new Post-9/11 rules.”¹⁵
- **Course Enrollment Barriers May Undermine Efficient Use of GI Bill Benefits**
Across all institution types, in nearly half of the focus groups there was a challenge to gain access to the relevant courses.¹⁶
- **Book Stipends Are Not Available to Spouses and May Be Perceived as Small**
Although the children of service members receive the book stipend, spouses do not receive a book allowance or a housing allowance. The book stipend, paid once per term and is pro-rated based on course load (24 credits per year is considered a full course load) is \$1,000.¹⁷
- **Confusion About Whether to Switch to the New GI Bill**
Some 38 percent of the survey participants said that understanding their eligibility was a moderate or major challenge. The confusion with the Post-9/11 GI Bill by members of the focus group caused them not to change from the MGIB because of the “horror stories” they heard from their peers about delayed payments. “Another reason they gave was the 12 months of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits they would be entitled to after exhausting their MGIB benefits, bringing their total GI Bill benefits to 48 rather than 36 months.”¹⁸
- **Tuition Rates and Yellow Ribbon Terms Vary Among States**
“With regard to Yellow Ribbon Program benefits, one focus group participant, one campus administrator, and two national advocates we talked with also raised another point of concern: namely the discrepancies in the Post-9/11 GI Bill’s tuition benefits among the states. These discrepancies result from the fact that maximum in-state tuition and fees vary enormously from state to state.”¹⁹
- **Active Guard Reservists Do Not Have Access to Post-9/11 Bill Benefits unlike traditional Reservists or Guardsmen, who may be periodically deployed overseas, AGRs work full time as service members for the National Guard to protect the homeland but are not currently entitled to benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.”²⁰**

Findings and/or Conclusions

A. Transitional Issues

Veterans making the transition from the military to postsecondary education can experience challenges additional to those experienced by traditional students. In 2009, the American Council of Education performed a study to determine what the Post-9/11 GI Bill may mean for post secondary institutions where military service members and veterans sought to attend these institutions. The goal of the study was twofold: to compare and summarize earlier GI Bills with the Post-9/11 GI Bill; and to describe participation and experiences of the military servicemembers and veterans at institutions of higher learning.²¹ The study showed that the percentage of veterans who were aged 39 or younger was growing Post-9/11,²² the number of female veterans was increasing,²³ and as of 2000, about three-fourths of veterans were married, 90 percent had been married at some point,²⁴ most chose public postsecondary institutions,²⁵ they were likely to attend full time/full year,²⁶ and they were financially independent from their parents.²⁷

¹⁵ *Id.*, 26

¹⁶ *Id.*, 24.

¹⁷ *Id.*, 25.

¹⁸ *Id.*, 25-26.

¹⁹ *Id.*, 26.

²⁰ *Id.*, 27.

²¹ Military Service and Veterans in Higher Education: What the New GI Bill May Mean for Postsecondary Institutions, available at <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/CPA/Publications/MilService.errata.pdf> (retrieved July 29, 2011)

²² *Id.*, 5.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*, 6.

²⁵ *Id.*, 10.

²⁶ *Id.*, 12.

²⁷ *Id.*

The final section of the study was an encapsulation of issues faced by military undergraduates. Some of the issues faced by military undergraduates are similar to those of other undergraduates and there are some that are specific to military undergraduates, such as: balancing family responsibilities; psychological and or physical health issues; cultural barriers; college bureaucracy; and transfers of college credits from the military.

Considering some 90 percent of veterans that are married or have been married at some point in their lives, a major issue facing military undergraduates is balancing family life. “Although the more generous benefits offered under the new GI Bill may reduce veterans’ need to work while enrolled, many military undergraduates still must balance family responsibilities with school. These responsibilities and demands on time make attending college difficult for undergraduate veterans.”²⁸

Another major issue facing military undergraduates is health related. “The transition to life after military service also can make attending college difficult for undergraduate veterans. They may be experiencing psychological and/or physical post-war trauma, readjusting to personal relationships, and adapting to a new lifestyle.”²⁹

After concerns of family responsibilities and health issues were dealt with, military undergraduates also had to deal with cultural issues. “Military undergraduates are not just adjusting to the transition from military to civilian life; they also are making a transition to college life, one that proves challenging for many students. Both military undergraduates and other nontraditional students can find it difficult to adjust after being out of the classroom for a significant period of time, and military undergraduates also may encounter additional cultural barriers in adjusting to campus life. Military and nonmilitary students’ perspective also differ, and sometimes nonmilitary students ask inappropriate questions of their military classmates (‘whether I killed somebody over there or not.’).”³⁰

As always, when dealing with large institutions, military undergraduates had to deal with the college and federal veterans’ bureaucracies. “Military undergraduates also sometimes have difficulty in their relations with college faculty, particularly when faculty disrupt their efforts at anonymity and unveil their military experience in class. Faculty members also may criticize the military and its personnel in the course of lectures, which may make military undergraduates, feel unwelcome.”³¹ Military undergraduates also can encounter bureaucratic obstacles at both the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the postsecondary institutions they attend. Military undergraduates have had difficulty receiving timely reimbursements for their educational expenses.”³²

“The new GI Bill’s direct payments to postsecondary institutions may ameliorate this problem for military undergraduates, but other bureaucratic barriers may remain, and new ones may be added as institutions and the VA adjusts to implementing a new program. Several studies have noted that information about veterans’ education benefits is not conveyed clearly to past and present military service members.”³³

“Staff at postsecondary institutions sometimes is not well versed in the details of veterans’ education benefits, which may cause additional problems for military students. School officials who do try to obtain information from the VA to help military undergraduates have reported that VA personnel often are not responsive or knowledgeable.”³⁴

Some military training and coursework is on a level that should be transferrable to a college, however, this is not easily done. “A final bureaucratic difficulty reported by military undergraduates is transferring credits between institutions and receiving college credits for military experience. Institutions could help military undergraduates earn their degrees more quickly and efficiently if they publicized that students can earn college credits for military training and clarified procedures for receiving and transferring credits.”³⁵

²⁸ *Id.*, 17.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*, 18.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*, 18-19.

³⁴ *Id.*, 19.

³⁵ *Id.*

The underlying focus of this report is to show best practices for military members and veterans to make the successful transition from combat to the college classrooms. Another report, *Transitions: Combat Veterans as College Students* (“Transitions Study”) provides additional information on this topic.³⁶ “The purpose of (this) study was to investigate how combat veterans who become college students make the transition to campus life, in order to identify how administrators can acknowledge and support them.”³⁷ From the Transitions Study, there are a number of findings by researchers and concerns raised by the veterans, themselves, that are important to be mentioned.

“The focus of our study was the transition that combat veterans make when they become college students. For many with whom we spoke, this was the most difficult transition of all. The Veterans Administration, which handles educational and medical benefits, is not an easy bureaucracy to understand, although some negotiated it well. Not all campuses have functioning programs in place to assist veterans who have become students. Then there were the challenges of fitting in, of just being a student.”³⁸

Speaking of fitting in after returning from combat, the Transitions Study offered a truly instructive insight on these concerns in the words of a returning veteran who was impacted by this process.

It would be a great help not to be just thrown into college. All the paperwork and whatnot I have to go through, they could offer a little more help as far as that and other veteran’s programs. I’m probably eligible for things I’m not aware of. And I have nobody here to go and talk to [to] find out about [them]. I’d like to see them actually have a Veteran’s Department here. Because when I walked in, they just tossed a piece of paper at me and said, “Oh, here, fill this out.” That does not help.
[Regular Army serviceperson]³⁹

While the military does offer briefings to those transitioning out of combat, the Transitions Study showed that a number of veterans are more concerned with just getting home to their families. “At the end of deployments, the military provides opportunities as part of the activities of processing out of the combat zone. A National Guard member spoke of ‘tons’ of debriefing sessions in Iraq, Kuwait, and then stateside. He noted that for most, ‘80 percent did not apply... You get in the habit of tuning it out since there is so much that does not apply. They kind of implied to us that if you have problems, you’re going to stay longer; nobody wanted to stay longer.’”⁴⁰

Many of those military veterans, in the survey, spoke of some of the problems they had with the Veterans’ Administration. “The upcoming role of the Veterans Administration (VA) in the post-deployment lives of soldiers was outlined during their debriefing sessions that apparently did not hold the attention of those who had just left combat zones and who very much wanted to get home. Some of the problems with the VA ‘concerned the payment of educational benefits. An Air Force veteran complained, ‘It took eight or more weeks to receive benefits.’ In the meantime, he had to come up with out-of-pocket funds for tuition and related college costs. His complaint was echoed by others.”⁴¹

There is also a difference in the quality of transitioning services received by members of the military. “Members of the National Guard likely fared better than other servicepersons because each National Guard unit has an educational officer who can help sort out benefit issues. One example of this disparity involves transcripts of military training from the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System. We spoke with several veterans who did not know that such a record existed, how a copy of the transcript could be obtained, or whether their college offered credit for military training. Generally, National Guard members had this information.”⁴²

³⁶ *Transitions: Combat Veterans as College Students*, <http://www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/ch1.pdf> (retrieved August 3, 2011).

³⁷ *Id.*, 5.

³⁸ *Id.*, 8.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*, 9.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

Although postsecondary institutions offered services to returning veterans, the Transitions Study showed that all campuses were not equal in the quality of services they provided. “Campuses usually have a designated person to administer benefit programs for veterans. On one of the campuses represented in our study, students had established close working relationships with staff in the veterans’ service office, which provided connections for students beyond the processing of educational benefits. In one of the other situations, the program director was newly appointed and received mixed reviews. On the third campus, the veterans’ services office received only criticisms; veterans from that campus were unaware of any services available to them through the office.”⁴³

“We heard about an exceptional level of service provided by veterans’ services office from a veteran who had transferred from another campus to one that was included in our survey. When his unit was deployed, staff from the veterans’ services office handled the withdrawals from classes, dealt with financial aid issues, and kept in contact with the soldiers while they were deployed by e-mailing campus news updates. When the deployment was over, the office initiated re-entry and benefits paperwork and assisted with registration for classes.”⁴⁴

Returning Veterans also gave their definition of “veteran-friendly campuses” in the Transitions Study. “The students we spoke with mentioned ‘veteran-friendly campuses’, and while that term was difficult to define, we came to understand that veterans used it to refer to campuses where programs and people were in place to assist with the transitions between college and the military. These campuses...have made an active commitment to the success of veteran students.”⁴⁵

The bottom line in the Transitions Study was that for all veterans returning from combat, a major adjustment was required. “Even for those who had attended college prior to being deployed, there was an adjustment upon their return. A major aspect of the adjustment was ‘relearning study skills.’ After having been away from school and formal classroom instruction, re-entry was difficult. Several students mentioned the need for an orientation to college programs just for veterans. While some adjustment issues could be attributed to being away from school for an extended period of time, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was also a factor.”⁴⁶ Because of PTSD, some of the students reported that they had very short patience and attention spans.

One of the students “mentioned that when he returned from a year of driving supply trucks between Kuwait and Iraq, he could not sleep at night. Several of the veterans talked about anger and stress as a carryover from their time in combat. These memories of war, of being on constant alert, and of being afraid remained close to the surface and were, for some, difficult to manage.”⁴⁷

The Transitions Study found that a positive aspect of listening to the returning veterans is that campuses learned the importance of a mentoring program (i.e., veteran-to-veteran). “Not surprisingly, participants offered suggestions about what campuses could do to assist veterans in their transition to college. Almost every participant spoke about efforts to identify veterans on campus and about being dependent for support on others who have had similar experiences.”⁴⁸

Probably the greatest transition mentioned in the Transitions Study was for veterans as they struggled to adapt to a new way of life—from military to civilian. “Study participants described the structured life of the military and how difficult it was to move from a strictly defined structure to a loosely configured campus where there was no chain of command from which to get answers.”⁴⁹

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*, 9-10.

⁴⁵ *Id.*, 10.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*, 11.

⁴⁹ *Id.*, 12.

B. Efforts to Address the Transitional Issues

1. The Maryland Compact

To address some of these transitional issues, the State of Maryland has established a Campus Compact for Student Veterans with 21 of its community colleges and four-year public universities to improve on-campus services for veterans. It calls on Maryland's higher education community to do more for the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. It also seeks to ensure educational success of veterans who choose to return to a Maryland school through greater awareness and understanding of the unique challenges student veterans face.

In January of 2011, the Lieutenant Governor of Maryland, Anthony Brown, signed the Maryland Campus Compact for Student Veterans Memorandum of Understanding between the State and Maryland Institutions of Higher Education ("the Maryland Compact"). The Maryland Compact was also signed by 21 community college and public four-year institutions' presidents. The Maryland Compact grew out of the need for the postsecondary institutions to provide greater assistance to members of the military, who faced unique challenges, as they sought to make the transition from the military to institutions of higher learning in Maryland.

The Maryland Compact sets out the significant basis for its necessity by addressing the number and need of returning veterans.

In 2010 there were over 470,000 Veterans residing in Maryland accounting for over 8% of the State's total population. Of these, more than 22,000 have recently returned from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and thousands more are expected as these conflicts continue. Veterans need our support to ensure their successful reintegration into civilian life, including in higher education. This compact seeks to ensure the educational success of Veterans who attend Maryland schools by promoting opportunities for colleges and universities to enhance their awareness and understanding of the reintegration needs of our Veterans. The compact also encourages the dissemination of recognized best practices in the academic and support services provided to Veterans.⁵⁰

The Maryland Compact seeks to develop veteran-friendly campuses throughout the state. "A number of Maryland colleges and universities have developed inclusive campuses where student Veterans feel welcome and quickly become an integral part of campus life. Many of these schools have also designed very successful academic transition programs and support services to further ensure Veteran success. One of the goals of this compact is to facilitate the sharing of these best practices among all of our public and private institutions with a hope that we can make higher education in Maryland truly 'Veteran Friendly' in both spirit and practice."⁵¹

Fundamentally, the purpose of the Compact is "to ensure the educational success of our returning Veterans, including their recruitment, successful transition into higher education, retention, and eventual graduation."⁵²

The Maryland Compact established best practices for postsecondary institutions seeking to become veteran friendly campuses. Those best practices require the institutions of higher learning, within their available resources, to improve the lives of veterans on campuses in six major areas:⁵³

1. **Awareness.** The goal is to insure that the entire organization of the higher education institution recognize the challenges for veterans' reintegration and provide further training to their personnel to improve their awareness of these challenges presented by veteran students.
2. **Coordination.** Provide effective communication to the institutions' staff and veteran students and coordinate those services that will lead to their success.

⁵⁰ Maryland Campus Compact for Student Veterans, Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Maryland Institutions of Higher Education, Signed by Maryland Lt. Governor Anthony Brown and the presidents of 21 Maryland institutions of higher learning, January 31, 2011, p.1

⁵¹ *Id.*, 1-2.

⁵² *Id.*, 2.

⁵³ *Id.*, 2-3.

3. **Designated “One Door”** “Provide a “one door” system so that student Veterans are able to connect to their educational and support needs through the establishment of a Veterans Office or designated staff person responsible for such coordination.”
4. **Behavioral Health** “Assist veterans needing behavioral health counseling and support resources through services provided on campus or through referral to appropriate agencies. As a counterpart, ensure that faculty and staff are well informed about post-traumatic stress symptoms, traumatic brain injury, and other behavioral health and relationship issues that are challenges for many returning veterans.”
5. **Financial Aid and GI Bill Support** “Veterans receiving GI Bill benefits should be viewed as a unique population by the financial aid office. In order to avoid barriers to success, particular care should be taken to ensure that veterans who have their benefits certified do not experience hardship and can continue their studies even if their G.I. Bill payments are late.”
6. **Peer Support** “Promote and support student Veteran groups as an opportunity for these students to interact with fellow Veterans, while still participating in campus life.”

2. Higher Education Initiative in Minnesota

In reviewing the study, *A Statewide Approach to Creating Veteran-Friendly Campuses* (“Statewide Veteran-Friendly Campuses”), staff identified the best practices for veteran-friendly campuses regarding the actions by the Minnesota Legislature. “There are no active-duty military installations in Minnesota. However, the Defense manpower Data Center...reported that a higher percentage than the national average per state of Minnesota Army, Air Guard, and Army Reserve soldiers have been deployed into combat areas since September 11, 2001.”⁵⁴

In 2006, the Minnesota state legislature enacted higher education initiatives, including the appropriation of \$600,000 to carry out the mandates of Minnesota Statute 197.585, the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program. The statute mandates “central liaison staff and campus veterans’ assistance officers to provide information and assistance to veterans regarding the availability of state, federal, local and private resources.” The legislation also stated that “each campus of the University of Minnesota and each institution within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System shall provide, and each private college and university is encouraged to provide, adequate space for a veterans’ service office.”⁵⁵

In addition the legislation required that the “Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System must recognize coursework and award educational credits for a veteran’s military training and service, if the course or training meets the standards of the American Council of Education or equivalent.”⁵⁶

Another piece of legislation, Minnesota Statute 197.775 (Higher Education Fairness), directed the MnSCU and the University of Minnesota “to treat all veterans as Minnesota residents for undergraduate tuition rate purposes irrespective of their state of origin or residency.” Graduate students could also be considered residents if the person was a resident upon entering the military and begins a graduate program within two years of completing military service. Moreover, the Higher Education Fairness legislation mandated that “University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System institutions may not assess late fees or other late charges for veterans who are eligible to receive, have applied for, and are waiting to receive federal educational assistance, nor prevent them from registering for a subsequent term.”⁵⁷

In 2007, the state legislature increased MDVA-Higher Education Veterans Programs funding from \$600,000 to \$1,050,000 annually. The legislature also created the “Minnesota GI Bill” to provide tuition assistance for Minnesota veterans and members of the National Guard or reserves (with at least five years of continuous service) who have served on or after September 11, 2001, including some assistance for dependents. Beginning in July 2008, the program

⁵⁴ Wiley Lokken, J.M., Pfeffer, D.S., McAuley, J. and Strong, C., *A Statewide Approach to Creating Veteran-Friendly Campuses*, New Directions for Student Services, Wiley Periodicals, Summer 2009, Volume 2009, Issue 126, p.46.

⁵⁵ *Id.*, 47.

⁵⁶ *Id.*, 48.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

provides tuition benefits each semester if the cost of tuition exceeds an individual's financial support from the federal student aid and federal military benefits. The benefit is capped at \$3,000 per academic year and \$10,000 lifetime.⁵⁸

In July 2006, the MDVA-Higher Education Veterans Programs began operation by dividing the state into six regions and assigning a coordinator in each region to carry out the mandates of the veteran's assistance legislation. A program director was also hired to oversee three Minnesota higher education institutions providing some form of specialized programming for veterans, including centers for veterans, military members, and their families. By June 2007, forty-one campuses were operating veteran's resource centers and serving more than 3,000 individuals.⁵⁹

Increased legislative funding for July 2007 allowed the program to increase the number of coordinators from six to twelve. In addition, the program director was able to hire a full-time administrative assistant. As of June 2008, fifty-six campus veterans resource centers have been established, and more than 4,000 individuals were served in the 2007-08 academic year.⁶⁰

3. US DVA VetSuccess on Campus Program / USF

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) is testing a national program called "VetSuccess on Campus" at eight colleges, including the University of South Florida (USF), offering personalized assistance to every veteran on campus. USF was the first college in the nation to get a full-time VA-funded VetSuccess representative on campus. The VA hopes to add more in 2012. This is a national effort designed to come up with ways for all postsecondary schools to become veteran-friendly campuses.⁶¹

The VetSuccess Program is a comprehensive program that receives support from the leadership of the Veterans Administration. "Veteran-students transitioning from active duty service to civilian educational pursuits face unique challenges entering the college setting," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "The VetSuccess on Campus program continues this Administration's commitment and responsibility to meet the needs of Veterans and their families through effective peer-to-peer counseling and other services."⁶²

The VA's commitment to the VetSuccess Program is not limited to just platitudes; they are putting forth resources to support the program. "Under the VetSuccess on Campus program, a full-time, experienced Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and a part-time Vet Center Outreach Coordinator are assigned at each campus to provide VA benefits outreach, support, and assistance to ensure their health, educational, and benefit needs are met."⁶³

The VetSuccess Program has now been expanded to additional postsecondary institutions around the country, including:

- Cleveland State University
- San Diego State University
- Community College of Rhode Island
- Arizona State University
- Texas A&M Central Texas
- Rhode Island College, and
- Salt Lake Community College.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*, 49.

⁶¹ <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2070> (retrieved 8-2-11)

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ *Id.*

⁶⁴ *Id.*

Under the VetSuccess on Campus program, vocational testing, career and academic counseling, and adjustment counseling are provided to work to resolve challenges interfering with completion of education programs and entrance into employment.⁶⁵

The Vet Center Outreach Coordinator provides peer-to-peer counseling and referral services. Both the counselor and coordinator may refer Veterans for more intensive health services, including mental health treatment through VHA Medical Centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, or Vet Centers, as well as provide additional information on VA benefits and services.⁶⁶

a. The Memorandum of Agreement between USF and the VA

USF and the VA entered into a Memorandum Of Agreement (“MOA”) to provide for the successful transition of veterans into the peace time civilian economy (family, workforce and education). “In order to advance, improve, and expand the employment opportunities for disabled and non-disabled veterans, both parties of this memorandum of agreement (MOA) commit themselves to active cooperation and coordination in meeting the goals set forth in this agreement. VA and USF shall work together to maximize services that will lead to the ultimate goal of veterans being successful in their educational programs and eventual transition to suitable employment in the civilian workforce.” The MOA is a comprehensive agreement to provide service delivery with support and resources by both parties to make USF a veteran-friendly campus by enhancing the quality of life for veteran students.⁶⁷

The VA will provide:

- On-campus outreach to veterans
- Knowledge of, and referral to, campus resources
- Transition support services
- Referrals for medical and mental health services
- Adjustment and career counseling services specific to VA benefits and Veteran issues
- Referrals for on-campus academic and career counseling services
- Assistance in applying for other VA benefits
- Job placement assistance and coordination with local Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs)
- Expertise to the University community on the veteran experience.⁶⁸

The University of South Florida will provide:

- Office space for VA personnel to provide services and assistance outlined in this agreement
- Inclusion of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) in student orientation activities, especially those designed for veteran students
- Expertise and training on current services provided by USF, including career counseling, vocational assessment, employment assistance, financial aid, financial services, psychological counseling and psychiatric services, health services, services for students with disabilities, learning assistance, and academic advising
- Inclusion of VRC on the USF administration’s Veterans Support Committee
- On-campus point of contact or liaison for VRC
- Expertise to VA on college student development and the college student experience.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN The University of South Florida and The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs. Received from 8-5-11, Larry Braue, Ed.D., U.S. Army (Ret.), Director, Office of Veterans Services, University of South Florida, lbraue@usf.edu <http://www.veterans.usf.edu>

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.*

4. Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Proposed Campus Veteran's Representative Program

In 2008 the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs (FDVA) made a proposal to the Florida Legislature to establish the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Campus Veterans' Representative Program ("Campus Veterans' Representative Program"). "The request is for one Accredited Veterans Representative at each of Florida's 28 state and community colleges and 11 state universities. A total of 39 FTE's employed and trained by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Division of Benefits Assistance for accreditation by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to access the entire range of benefits returning veterans have earned."⁷⁰ The appropriation request for the program was \$2,108,496. In the FDVA's budget for 2008, all 39 positions were authorized by the Legislature; however, they were not funded.

The goal of the Campus Veterans' Representative Program was to create veteran-friendly campuses throughout the community college and state university system in Florida. "Ideally we should provide "one stop servicing," that is not only addressing educational benefits but providing access to all federal veteran benefits."⁷¹ This would be accomplished because of the scope and authority of the Campus Veterans' Representatives. "In order to file claims and access federal VA databases, the campus veteran's representative would need to be authorized via an established training program similar to the training required by the Veteran's Claims Examiners employed by the FDVA."⁷²

Options and/or Recommendations

Florida has made great strides in improving the lives of military personnel and veterans as they return from combat and matriculate through the educational institutions and transition into civilian life. However, more can be done. The findings of this report suggest several options, either one will be an improvement and address the issue. Some of which can be done through legislation and some otherwise. Each of these options will provide for the successful transition for veterans at Florida's postsecondary institutions and greater opportunities for veteran-friendly campuses.

The first list of options do not require legislative action, they include:

- Create a more robust awareness campaign to let veterans know of their rights and benefits under the current GI Bill programs;
- Adopt a Florida Campus Compact (similar to the Maryland Compact) with the community colleges and universities;
- Request the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to expand the "VetSuccess" program at the University of South Florida to all universities in Florida;

The second list of options requires legislative action, they include:

- Provide \$2,108,496 in funding by the legislature to the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs' proposed Campus Veterans' Representative Program; and
- Create legislation similar to Minnesota to establish a Florida GI Bill Program.

⁷⁰ Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Campus Veteran's Representative Program, Concept Paper, OPB Strategic Planning Meeting, July 22, 2008, Revised October 9, 2008, Revised February 1, 2011.

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

THE FLORIDA SENATE

COMMITTEE APPEARANCE RECORD

(Submit to Committee Chair or Administrative Assistant)

10/18/11
Date

N/A
Bill Number

Barcode

Name Kasongo Butler
Address Gaines Street
Tall FL 32317
City State Zip

Phone 850-245-9453
E-mail Kasongo.butler@fldoe.org
Job Title Assistant Chancellor

Speaking: For Against Information Appearing at request of Chair

Subject Attracting Student Veterans to

Representing DOE, Division of Florida Colleges

Lobbyist registered with Legislature: Yes No

Pursuant to s. 11.061, Florida Statutes, state, state university, or community college employees are required to file the first copy of this form with the Committee, unless appearance has been requested by the Chair as a witness or for informational purposes.

If designated employee: Time: from _____ .m. to _____ .m.

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: LL 37

Case:

Type:

Caption: Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Judge:

Started: 10/18/2011 8:34:14 AM

Ends: 10/18/2011 10:29:33 AM Length: 01:55:20

8:34:18 AM Call to Order
8:34:23 AM Roll Call by the Committee's AA, Lois Graham
8:34:42 AM Comment from Chairman Altman regarding Senator Bullard being excused
8:35:04 AM SB 148 by Bullard - Community Redevelopment
8:35:23 AM Presented by Angela Lange
8:36:00 AM Question - Senator Jones
8:37:04 AM Question - Senator Norman
8:38:29 AM Question - Senator Bennett
8:39:15 AM Comments - Senator Altman
8:40:56 AM Comments - Senator Norman
8:41:29 AM Question - Senator Altman
8:41:59 AM Question - Senator Jones
8:42:56 AM Question - Senator Gibson
8:44:05 AM Statement from Brian Pitts - Justice-2-Jesus
8:46:57 AM Comments - Senator Altman
8:48:08 AM Roll Call Vote on Senate Bill 148 by the Committee's AA, Lois Graham
8:48:14 AM SB 148 reported favorable
8:48:39 AM SB 276 by Sachs - Special Observances/Purple Heart Day
8:50:19 AM Roll Call Vote by the Committee's AA, Lois Graham
8:50:33 AM SB 276 reported favorable
8:51:26 AM Introduction of Senator Gibson by Chairman Altman
8:51:42 AM Comments from Senator Gibson
8:51:58 AM Presentation by Colonel Mike Prendergast, Executive Director of the FL. Dept. of Veteran Affairs
9:21:03 AM Question - Senator Bennett
9:26:30 AM Question - Senator Fasano
9:30:46 AM Question - Senator Sachs
9:36:22 AM Question - Senator Storms
9:40:45 AM Question - Senator Storms
9:42:32 AM Question - Senator Storms
9:44:05 AM Question - Senator Norman
9:47:20 AM Question - Senator Altman
9:50:24 AM Comment from Chairman Altman regarding Senator Storms voting YES on SB 148 and 276
9:50:59 AM Interim Project 2012-133 - Attracting Student Veterans to Science and Engineering Degree Fields
9:51:14 AM Presented by Elizabeth Fleming, Committee Staff Analyst
9:55:34 AM Comments/Question - Senator Bennett
9:58:21 AM Question - Senator Sachs
10:01:41 AM Question - Senator Storms
10:04:44 AM Question - Senator Gibson
10:07:07 AM Comments from Mr. Prendergast
10:07:09 AM Question - Senator Gibson
10:07:26 AM Question - Senator Bennett
10:13:20 AM Comments from Kasongo Butler, Assistant Chancellor, DOE, Division of Florida Colleges
10:14:28 AM Interim Project 2012-134 - Establishing a Campus Compact for Student Veterans and Institutions of Higher Learning
10:14:29 AM Presented by Committee's Staff Director, Dr. Matt Carter

10:24:02 AM Question - Senator Norman
10:26:13 AM Question - Senator Altman
10:26:50 AM Question - Senator Altman
10:27:56 AM Question - Senator Gibson
10:29:25 AM Senator Bennett moves to adjourn



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

COMMITTEES:

Agriculture, *Vice Chair*
Education Pre-K - 12, *Vice Chair*
Budget - Subcommittee on General Government
Appropriations
Budget - Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism,
and Economic Development Appropriations
Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security
Reapportionment
Rules
Transportation

SENATOR LARCENIA J. BULLARD

39th District

October 18, 2011

The Honorable Thad Altman
Chair
Military Affairs, Space and
Domestic Security
531 Knott Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Dear Senator Altman:

I humbly request an excused absence for today's Military Affairs Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larcenia Bullard".

Larcenia Bullard
39th District

LJB/al

Cc: Matthew M. Carter II, Ph.D., Staff Director
Lois Graham, Committee Administrative Assistant

REPLY TO:

- ☐ 8603 South Dixie Highway, Suite 304, Miami, Florida 33143 (305) 668-7344
- 218 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5127

Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

MIKE HARIDOPOLOS
President of the Senate

MICHAEL S. "MIKE" BENNETT
President Pro Tempore