

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services

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**BILL:** CS/CS/SB 1666

**INTRODUCER:** Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services; Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee; and Senator Collins

**SUBJECT:** Veterans

**DATE:** February 22, 2024      **REVISED:** \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Howard</u>	<u>McKnight</u>	<u>AHS</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>FP</u>	_____

**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**  
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

**I. Summary:**

CS/CS/SB 1666 contains multiple provisions on veterans. The bill:

- Expands job outreach, marketing and support services of Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida);
- Increases the number of board members that govern the Florida is for Veterans Corporation from nine members to eleven. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint one additional member to the board from the body for which they preside to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members.
- Clarifies that the focus of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is to link veterans and their spouses with businesses in a target or secondary industry business;
- Allows an educational stipend for veterans while training at any location of the University of Florida’s (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) within the state;
- Expands the role of Veterans Florida in assisting with industry certification;
- Provides that a participating business in a Veterans Florida grant program may also receive a grant under any state program, and not just the Quick Response Training Program;
- Exempts veterans from certain business filing fees with the Department of State;
- Creates a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses for honorably discharged veterans with a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or more;
- Revises the structure, appointment of members, and frequency of meetings of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries; and

- Adds to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.

The bill creates the Florida Veterans' History Program (Program) within the Department of State's Division of Arts and Culture (Division). The Program will act to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and the State of Florida's military contributions throughout the nation's history. The Division may request assistance with the Program from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

To complete the goal of the Program, the bill requires the Division's folklorists to identify those veterans who are willing to share their experiences. The veterans may submit written or electronic accounts of their experiences for inclusion in the Program. The bill allows the Division to adopt rules to implement the Program and to contract with a third-party vendor to fulfil these responsibilities.

The bill appropriates \$91,207 in recurring General Revenue funds to the Division and one full-time equivalent position with an associated salary rate of 68,771 to implement and administer the Program.

The bill appropriates \$528,514 in nonrecurring General Revenue funds to the University of Florida for the purpose of conducting a longitudinal study on the efficacy of ketamine in treating depression in the veteran population of this state.

The bill may have an indeterminate, significant negative fiscal impact. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

## **II. Present Situation:**

### **Department of State**

The Department of State (DOS), created in s. 20.10, F.S., is composed of six divisions: Elections, Historical Resources, Corporations, Library and Information Services, Arts and Culture, and Administration. The head of the DOS is the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor, and is confirmed by the Senate. The Secretary performs functions conferred by the State Constitution upon the custodian of state records.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary also serves as the state protocol officer and, in consultation with the Governor and other governmental officials, develops, maintains, publishes, and distributes the state protocol manual.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 20.10(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 15.01(1), F.S.

### ***Division of Arts and Culture***

The DOS's Division of Arts and Culture (Division) is the State's arts agency. The Division promotes access to culture opportunities through different programs and grants.<sup>3</sup> The Division provides funding for the following:

- Arts in education;
- Local arts agencies;
- State service organizations;
- Museums;
- Theater;
- Dance;
- Folk art;
- Literature;
- Media arts;
- Multidisciplinary;
- Music; and
- Visual arts programs and projects.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Department of State and Incorporation***

The DOS is responsible for receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required in law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,<sup>5</sup> articles of incorporation,<sup>6</sup> and registration of fictitious names.<sup>7</sup> A person who wants to file incorporation and business filings with the DOS must pay the appropriate fee. Amongst the filings received and maintained by the DOS, and the appropriate filing fee associated with them, are those identified in:

- Chapter 605, Florida Revised Limited Liability Company Act: limited liability companies file with the DOS a registration with their name, registered agent, and registered office location;<sup>8</sup>
- Chapter 607, Florida Business Corporation Act: corporations file their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;<sup>9</sup>
- Chapter 617, Corporations Not For Profit: requires not for profit corporations to file with the DOS their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;<sup>10</sup> and
- Chapter 620, Partnership Laws: limited partnerships must file a certificate of limited partnership with the DOS containing the name of the limited partnership, the address, and the business address of each general partner<sup>11</sup> as well as an annual report, among other

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<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of State, Florida Division of Arts and Culture, *Mission*, <https://dos.fl.gov/cultural/about-us/mission/> (Nov. 30, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *See, e.g.*, ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 607.0203, F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 865.09, F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Sections 605.0112(5), 605.113(4), and 605.113(5), F.S. *See s.* 605.0206, F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Sections 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. *See* 607.0120(9), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Sections 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

documents.<sup>12</sup> General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>13</sup>

Fees vary and a sampling is provided below.

<b>Department of State Filing Fees</b>		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

**Florida is for Veterans, Inc.**

The purpose of Florida is for Veterans (Veterans Florida) is to promote the state as veteran-friendly by assisting veterans and their spouses with connections to businesses and employment.<sup>14</sup> Duties of Veterans Florida are to:

- Contract with a research entity experienced in performing market research on the veteran demographic to identify the target market and their educational and employment needs;
- Advise the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on the target market; a marketing campaign designed to keep the target market in the state; and methods to disseminate information to the target market on interests and needs of veterans and their families;
- Promote and enhance the value of military skill sets to businesses;
- Implement the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program;
- Responsibly and prudently manage all funds received and ensure that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements;
- Administer relevant programs; and
- Serve as the state’s principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense’s SkillBridge program for employers and transitioning servicemembers.<sup>15</sup>

Veterans Florida is governed by a nine-member board of directors.<sup>16</sup> The Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint three members to the board, in consideration of military experience and business expertise. Members of the board of directors serve for staggered terms of four years. Board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred while serving.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Section 620.1210, F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Section 295.21(1), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 295.21(3), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

## Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The Florida Department of Veteran Affairs (FDVA) established the Veterans Employment and Training Services program to link veterans and their spouses with businesses for employment.<sup>18</sup> The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans or their spouses.<sup>19</sup> The program is administered by Veterans Florida, whose duties include:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses who live in the state or are interested in relocating and are seeking employment;
  - Offering skills assessments to veterans or their spouses to establish employment goals and apply for and achieve gainful employment;
  - Assisting Florida businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and veterans' spouses, including providing information about state and federal benefits of hiring veterans;
  - Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of businesses;
  - Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in this state that connects business leaders in the state with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs;
  - Performing its functions as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for qualified businesses in this state and transitioning servicemembers;
  - Assisting veterans and their spouses in accessing training, education, and employment in health care professions; and
  - Coordinating with the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health (DOH) to assist veterans and their spouses in obtaining licensure.
- Chapter 620, Partnership Laws: limited partnerships must file a certificate of limited partnership with the DOS containing the name of the limited partnership, the address, and the business address of each general partner<sup>20</sup> as well as an annual report, among other documents.<sup>21</sup> General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>22</sup>

## Hunting and Fishing Licenses

A person who wants to recreationally hunt or fish in Florida must obtain a recreational license, permit, or authorization number and pay the appropriate fee.<sup>23</sup>

Section 379.353(2), F.S., exempts specified individuals from having to possess a recreational license while hunting or fishing. A few examples include any person hunting or freshwater fishing on her or his homestead property, or on the homestead property of the person's spouse or

<sup>18</sup> Section 295.22(2), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> 295.22(2), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 620.1210, F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 379.354, F.S.

minor child; any minor child hunting or freshwater fishing on the homestead property of her or his parent; and any resident who is a member of the United States Armed Forces and not stationed in this state, when home on leave for 30 days or less, upon submission of orders.

In addition, an exemption on a hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license and permit fee is available to a resident who is certified or determined to be:

- Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of workers’ compensation under chapter 440 as verified by an order of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the carrier providing workers’ compensation benefits, or to be totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board, by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or a branch of the United States Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued by the FDVA, upon proof of the same.<sup>24</sup> A license issued on a no fee basis expires after five years and must be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.<sup>25</sup>
- Disabled as verified by the United States Social Security Administration. A license issued on a no fee basis expires after two years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every two years thereafter.<sup>26</sup>

Current fees on these licenses for Florida residents are provided below.

<b>Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees</b>		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

**Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries**

The Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, created within the DOH, is a 16-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council is required to meet twice a year<sup>27</sup> and is composed of a minimum of:

- Four individuals with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals with brain injuries;
- Four individuals with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals with spinal cord injuries; and
- Two individuals who represent the special needs of children with brain or spinal cord injuries.<sup>28</sup>

The remaining balance of council members must be physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, and representatives from support groups that have expertise in the rehabilitation of individuals with brain or spinal cord injuries.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Section 379.353(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 379.353(1), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 379.353(1)(b), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 381.78(1), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Section 381.78(1), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

Council members are appointed by the State Surgeon General. All members serve for a four year term and can only serve two terms. The council must meet at least twice annually.<sup>30</sup>

The purpose of the council is to provide advice and expertise to the DOH in the preparation, implementation, and periodic review of the brain and spinal cord injury program.<sup>31</sup>

Members of the advisory council serve unpaid but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses for required attendance at council meetings.<sup>32</sup>

### **Special Instruction for Middle and High Grades Public School Students**

Instructional staff of public schools are required to provide instruction on:

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including national sovereignty, natural law, self-evident truth, equality of all persons, limited government, popular sovereignty, and inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property, and how they form the philosophical foundation of our government.
- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the U.S. Constitution, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights and how the constitution provides the structure of our government.
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the most important of the Federalist Papers.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government, including the primary functions of and interrelationships between the Federal Government, the state, and its local entities.
- U.S. history, including the period of discovery, early colonies, the War for Independence, the Civil War, the expansion of the United States to its present boundaries, the world wars, and the civil rights movement to the present.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the history and contributions of Americans of the African diaspora to society.
- The history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the history of Japanese internment camps and the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II; the immigration, citizenship, civil rights, identity, and culture of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to American society.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States.
- The study of women's contributions to the United States.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide. Limits instruction to on or before Medal of

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<sup>30</sup> Sections 381.78(2) and (3), F.S.

<sup>31</sup> Section 381.78(4), F.S.

<sup>32</sup> Section 381.78(5), F.S.

Honor Day, Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day. Instructional staff is encouraged to use the assistance of local veterans and Medal of Honor recipients.<sup>33</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates s. 265.8021, F.S., to establish the Florida Veterans' History Program (Program) within the Division of Arts and Culture (Division) as a Florida Folklife Program. The Program will collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and the State of Florida's military contributions throughout the nation's history. The section authorizes the Division to request assistance with the Program from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The bill requires the Division's folklorists to seek out and identify veterans who are willing to share their experiences to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and the State of Florida's military contributions. The section authorizes the Division to adopt rules to implement the Program and to contract with a third-party vendor to fulfil these responsibilities. The bill provides that a veteran,<sup>34</sup> as defined in s. 1.01(14), F.S., will be eligible to participate.

The bill appropriates \$91,207 in recurring General Revenue funds to the Division and one full-time equivalent position with an associated salary rate of 68,771 to implement and administer the Florida Veterans' History Program.

The bill appropriates \$528,514 in nonrecurring General Revenue funds to the University of Florida for the purpose of conducting a longitudinal study on the efficacy of ketamine in treating depression in the veteran population of this state.

The bill revises multiple provisions on veterans to expand benefits, revise the structure of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, and provide instruction to public K-12 students on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

#### **Florida is for Veterans, Inc.**

The bill amends s. 295.21, F.S., to:

- Specify that the purpose of Florida is for Veterans (Veterans Florida) is to serve as the state's initial point of military transition assistance;
- Expand the duties of Veterans Florida to require marketing, awareness, and outreach activities directed towards the target market, defined as members and their spouses of the U.S. Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge; veterans with 36 months or less since discharge; and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves; and
- Increases the number of board members that govern the Florida is for Veterans Corporation from nine members to eleven. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint one additional member to the board from the body for which they preside to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members.

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<sup>33</sup> Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

<sup>34</sup> The term "veteran" means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions only or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions, notwithstanding any action by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on individuals discharged or released with other than honorable discharges. Section 1.01(14), F.S.

## **Veterans Employment and Training Services Program**

The bill amends s. 295.22, F.S., to:

- Include in the purpose of the program to connect veterans and spouses with opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, training, and resources; to inspire veteran-owned small business; and to assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting veterans and spouses.
- Define as a secondary industry business, a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have skills that are directly transferrable. Identifies these businesses as those in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.
- Define as a veteran, either a person who, irrespective of discharge status, served in the active military, naval, or air service or a servicemember, a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty, the Florida National Guard, or the U.S. Reserve Forces.
- Clarify that a spouse is a person who is married to a veteran or an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran.
- Define a target industry business as a corporate headquarters business or any business with the features of future growth, stability, high wage, market and resource dependent, industrial base diversification, and positive economic impact and strengthening.
- Define as a target market members, and their spouses, of the U.S. Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge; veterans with 36 months or less since discharge; and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves.
- Tailor required marketing and recruiting efforts to direct them at veterans and their spouses within the target market, to include information related to how a veteran's military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business.
- Replace the role of Veterans Florida assisting with information on industry certification with that of prioritizing a certificate, license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List, as is established by the state board, that is the board of directors of CareerSource Florida, Inc.; a federally created certification or license; and a skills-based certification or license as deemed relevant by Veterans Florida.
- Authorize a participating business to receive a grant from any state program rather than identifying as the sole grant program the Quick Response Training Program.
- Authorize Veterans Florida to use a portion of grant funds, as determined by Veterans Florida, for veterans who are not active members of the U.S. Armed Forces for educational stipends while in training at a UF IFAS location within Florida, if the training is between four and six months in duration. The bill requires Veterans Florida to enter into a grant agreement before funds may be expended.
- Redesignate the SkillBridge program as the SkillBridge initiative; incorporate references to target and secondary industries; and replace references to transitioning servicemembers with eligible veterans;
- Authorize Veterans Florida to assist state agencies and other public entities with recruiting veterans and spouses;
- Encourage Veterans Florida to collaborate with state agencies and other public entities to maximize access to and provide information on one website that, if possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact information, if available, for state agencies and

other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

- Provide that outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals between agencies, entities, and Veterans Florida on programs and initiatives that may be conducted include, but are not limited to, the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and the:
  - Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) through access to benefits and assistance programs and the Hope Navigators Program.
  - Department of Commerce, through the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representatives; CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services; the Quick-Response Training Program; and the direct support organization established in s. 288.012(6).
  - Department of Business and Professional Regulation, through reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.
  - Department of Education, through CAPE industry certifications and information related to earning postsecondary credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military.
  - Department of Health, through the Office of Veteran Licensure Services and the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.
- Further authorizes Veterans Florida to coordinate and collaborate with the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, the State University System, the Florida College System, the Florida Defense Support Task Force, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, and the Florida Talent Development Council.

**Exemption on Filing Fees for Incorporation**

The bill creates s. 295.25, F.S., to exempt veterans who are state residents from having to pay fees collected by the Department of State for the specific filings of:

- Articles of organization;
- Articles of incorporation;
- A certificate of limited partnership;
- A partnership registration statement; or
- A designation of a registered agent.

Fees charged for filings, now exempted, are listed below.

<b>Department of State Filing Fees</b>		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

**Expansion of No Cost Fee for Recreational License**

The bill amends s. 379.353(1), F.S., to create a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses and permits for a disabled veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who was honorably discharged from service and who is certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater.

The veteran must provide proof of disability.

Fees charged for licenses, now exempted, are listed below.

<b>Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees</b>		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

The no-cost license expires after five years and must be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.

**Revision of Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries**

The bill amends s. 381.78, F.S., to revise the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries structure to require:

- Two, rather than four, persons with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, appointed as one each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two, rather than four, persons with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, appointed as one each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries, appointed as one each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two persons who have, or who are family members of persons who have or had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports, appointed as one each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two veterans who served in the active military, naval, or air service; are honorably discharged or upgraded to an honorable discharge; and have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans, appointed as one each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- Six persons who are physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, or representatives from support groups who have expertise in

areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries, and requires appointment by the State Surgeon General.

The bill provides for staggered terms.

The frequency of meetings by the council is increased from at least twice annually to at least quarterly, with meeting adjournment to be by unanimous consent.

#### **Instruction on Veterans' Day and Memorial Day**

The bill amends s. 1003.42(2), F.S., to add to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day. These lessons must take place on or before the holiday.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

#### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

A veteran who submits a business filing to the Department of State (DOS) will not have to pay a filing fee for certain filings.

A veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled, and applies for a hunting, fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit, will receive the license or permit without the payment of a state fee.

A veteran who is in training at a University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) location within Florida may be eligible for an educational stipend from Florida is for Veterans (Veterans Florida).

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

CS/CS/SB 1666 may have an indeterminate, significant negative fiscal impact on state expenditures and revenues.

Expansion of Veterans Florida duties and the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program within the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) may have an insignificant fiscal impact on the FDVA's Veterans Florida program. The FDVA is currently appropriated \$2 million in both the House and Senate proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2025 General Appropriation Acts to continue their duties. The FDVA's Veterans Florida may request funding in future fiscal years as the program expands.<sup>35</sup>

Exemption of certain filing fees for veterans related to business incorporations and associated filings currently range from \$25 to \$965 per filing. The DOS estimates it would be difficult to determine the fiscal impact on the DOS's revenues. However, based on Florida having the third largest population of veterans in the nation, and referencing 2023 business filing types statistics, the impact to DOS's revenues may be as much as \$9.3 million in nonrecurring revenues.<sup>36</sup>

Exemption of state fees on hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses each currently cost \$15.50 for a veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) projects an indeterminate, negative fiscal impact on FWC revenues and could result in reduced grant funding from the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program as exempt license holders cannot be counted towards license certification. Also, the FWC would need to implement the exemption from paying fees for recreational hunting and fishing licenses and permits for disabled veterans, including changes to the GoOutdoorsFlorida licensing system, communicating changes to tax collectors and subagents, and performing online verifications. The FWC can absorb this within existing resources.<sup>37</sup>

School districts may also experience an indeterminate fiscal impact to meet the bill's requirements. In section 7 of the bill, school districts would be required to provide two

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<sup>35</sup> Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, Senate Bill CS/SB 1666 fiscal analysis summary (January 29, 2024) (on file with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services).

<sup>36</sup> Department of State, Senate Bill CS/SB 166 fiscal analysis (February 6, 2024) (on file with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services).

<sup>37</sup> Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Senate Bill CS/SB 166 fiscal analysis summary (February 6, 2024) (on file with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services).

45-minute lessons for middle and high school students in public schools on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.

#### **VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The bill increases the number of board members that must govern the Florida is for Veterans Corporation from nine members to eleven members; however, the total number of board members in s. 295.21, F.S., still states nine members.

#### **VII. Related Issues:**

None.

#### **VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 295.21, 295.22, 379.353, 381.78, 288.0001, and 1003.42.

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 265.8021 and 295.25.

This bill reenacts the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 379.3581 and 379.401.

#### **IX. Additional Information:**

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

##### **CS/CS by Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services on February 20, 2024:**

The committee substitute:

- Creates the Florida Veterans' History Program (Program) within the Department of State's Division of Arts and Culture (Division). The Program will act to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and the State of Florida's military contributions throughout the nation's history. The Division may request assistance with the Program from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Requires the Division's folklorists to identify those veterans who are willing to share their experiences. The veterans may submit written or electronic accounts of their experiences for inclusion in the Program. The bill allows the Division to adopt rules to implement the Program and to contract with a third-party vendor to fulfil these responsibilities.
- Appropriates \$91,207 in recurring General Revenue funds to the Division and one full-time equivalent position with an associated salary rate of 68,771 to implement and administer the Program.
- Appropriates \$528,514 in nonrecurring General Revenue funds to the University of Florida for the purpose of conducting a longitudinal study on the efficacy of ketamine in treating depression in the veteran population of this state.
- Increases the number of board members that govern the Florida is for Veterans Corporation from nine members to eleven. The President of the Senate and the

Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint one additional member to the board from the body for which they preside to serve as ex officio, nonvoting member.

- Clarifies that Veterans Employment and Training Services Program outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals between agencies, entities, and Veterans Florida on programs and initiatives that may be conducted include the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and the direct support organization as established in statute replacing the reference to Select Florida.

**CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 29, 2024:**

The CS:

- For the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, the definition of a servicemember is added and defined as a person serving as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and U.S. Reserve Forces; a spouse is redefined to include an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran; and a veteran is defined as, irrespective of discharge status, a person who otherwise meets the definition of veteran in s. 1.01(14), F.S., or who is a servicemember.
- For a 50 percent or greater service-connected disabled veteran who is eligible for a no-cost hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license, the license expires after five years and must be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.
- For the advisory council on brain and spinal injuries, for each of the appointments that the Speaker of the House provides, the President of the Senate will have one appointment, so that each will have one appointment for each type of appointment, for a total of five appointments each.

**B. Amendments:**

None.