

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

CS/HB 29 — Military and Veterans Affairs

by Commerce Committee and Reps. Ponder, Renner, and others (CS/SB 1884 by Appropriations Committee and Senators Broxson, Passidomo, Baxley, Bean, Benacquisto, Book, Bracy, Bradley, Brandes, Campbell, Flores, Gainer, Galvano, Garcia, Gibson, Grimsley, Hukill, Hutson, Lee, Mayfield, Montford, Negron, Perry, Powell, Rader, Rodriguez, Rouson, Simmons, Simpson, Stargel, Steube, Stewart, Taddeo, Thurston, Torres, and Young)

The bill (Chapter 2018-7, L.O.F.) amends various sections of law related to education and employment opportunities for current and former military personnel and their families.

Department of Health

The bill allows the spouse of a military member who holds an active license to practice dentistry in another state or jurisdiction to qualify for expedited licensure in Florida and receive the associated licensure fee waivers. Current law offers expedited licensing and fee waivers to a military spouse who holds an active license to practice a health care profession, *excluding dentistry*, in another state or jurisdiction.

The bill also removes the requirement that a military spouse who holds a temporary license to practice dentistry must practice under the indirect supervision of a dentist who holds an active license to practice in Florida.

The bill provides an affirmative defense to administrative, civil, and criminal causes of action for the unlicensed practice of a health care profession. The affirmative defense is available to a spouse of an active duty military member if:

- The spouse is licensed in another state or jurisdiction to provide health care services for which there is no equivalent in this state;
- The spouse is providing health care services within the scope of the out-of-state license; and
- The training or experience required for the out-of-state license is substantially similar to the licensure requirements for a similar health care profession in this state.

Department of Business and Professional Regulation

The bill waives license renewal fees for military members, veterans, and their spouses or surviving spouses who hold a professional license regulated by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR). Specifically, the bill grants a license renewal fee waiver to a DBPR licensee who is:

- An active duty military member, while on active duty and for two years following discharge from active duty;

- The spouse of an active duty military member who is present in Florida because of the member's active duty service; and
- The surviving spouse of a military member who died while on active duty and died within two years preceding the spouse's license renewal date.

Current law waives the initial application fee for military members, veterans, and their spouses or surviving spouses who apply for a DBPR license.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Current law waives the initial application fee for honorably discharged veterans and their spouses applying for a professional license regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS). The bill expands eligibility for the fee waiver to include the surviving spouse of an honorably discharged veteran, a current military member with active duty service, and such member's spouse. The bill also removes the requirement that a veteran must apply for licensure within 60 months of discharge to qualify for the fee waiver.

Additionally, the bill grants a license renewal fee waiver to a DACS licensee who is an active duty military member or spouse, a current or former military member who served on active duty within 2 years preceding the renewal date, or the surviving spouse of a military member who died while serving on active duty within the 2 years preceding the surviving spouse's renewal date.

Office of Financial Regulation

The bill waives the initial application, assessment, and renewal fees for current and former military members and their spouses or surviving spouses who apply for or renew a mortgage loan originator license or register as an associated person of a securities dealer or investment advisor.

Department of Financial Services

The bill waives the initial application and licensing fees associated with licensure in the funeral and cemetery service industry for a military member, the member's spouse, and a veteran who was honorably discharged within 24 months. The bill also requires the Board of Funeral, Cemetery, and Consumer Services to recognize applicable military-issued credentials for purposes of licensure as an embalmer, funeral director, or direct disposer.

The bill eliminates the pre-licensure course requirements for insurance profession licenses for a military member, an honorably discharged veteran, or the spouse of such member or veteran. The bill also expands the existing application fee waiver for insurance profession licenses to include veterans who have "separated" from the military within 2 years before application. Currently, the waiver applies to veterans who "retired" within 2 years. The change allows veterans who have less than 20 years of military service to receive the allowance.

The bill allows the Department of Financial Services to extend the four-year period in which certified firefighters must meet specified conditions to retain a firefighter certificate for an honorably discharged veteran or the spouse of a veteran. The bill also waives all living and incidental expenses associated with attending the Florida State Fire College for a military member, an honorably discharged veteran, and the spouse or surviving spouse of such member or veteran.

Department of Education

The bill allows the Governor to issue a proclamation designating March 25th as “Medal of Honor Day” and requires public schools to incorporate the value of recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor in the school’s character development program.

The bill allows children of military personnel stationed outside of Florida to enroll in Florida Virtual School if their home of record or state of legal residence is Florida, and provides such students enrollment priority.

The bill creates a pathway for veterans to become school principals. An honorably discharged veteran who served as a commissioned or non-commissioned officer in the U.S. military for at least three years may be issued a three-year temporary certificate in educational leadership if the veteran has earned a passing score on the Florida Educational Leadership Exam and is employed fulltime in a position for which a Florida educators’ certificate is required in a Florida school. The temporary certificate will allow a veteran to be accepted into a Level II program (principal training program) and receive a professional school principal certificate upon completion of the Level II program.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules to allow the Department of Education (DOE) to extend the validity period of a temporary teaching certificate for two additional years if the requirements for the professional certificate have not been fulfilled due to the military service of an applicant’s spouse. The extension does not apply to the general knowledge requirement, which must be completed within one year of obtaining the temporary certificate, pursuant s. 1015.56(2)(g), F.S.

The bill allows Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) instructors to be eligible to receive funding through the Florida Teachers Classroom Supply Assistance Program. Currently, JROTC instructors who do not meet the definition of “classroom teacher” are not eligible to receive the program funding.

The bill waives the initial Florida Teacher Certification Examination fees and the initial teacher certification fee for current and former military members and their spouses or surviving spouses.

The bill requires the DOE to lead and coordinate outreach effort to educate veterans about apprenticeship and career opportunities. The bill also allows apprenticeship programs to provide

special consideration to veterans, minority persons and women, unless otherwise prohibited by law, rule, or regulation.

The bill provides that if a member of the Florida National Guard or U.S. Armed Forces Reserves seeking licensure or qualification for a trade, occupation, or profession is ordered into active duty, the boards of examiners or other qualification boards must accept such periods of training and practical experience in place of the interrupted or delayed periods of training, study, apprenticeship, or practical experience for a professional license. The board must determine that the standard and type of work or training performed in the Florida National Guard or the U.S. Armed Forces Reserves is substantially the same as the standard and type required under Florida law.

Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.

The bill broadens the purpose of the training grant program administered by Veterans Florida. The bill allows Veterans Florida to issue grants to businesses to fund training to promote or generally improve specialized skills of veterans already employed by a business. Currently, grants are limited to fund training for *newly hired* veterans. Additionally, the bill provides that a veteran's training funded by the program may not exceed 12 months and specifies that a business must cover the entire cost of a veteran's training before receiving the 50-percent reimbursement of the training costs.

As it relates to Veterans Florida's entrepreneurship initiative program, the bill allows Veterans Florida to contract not only with universities, but with any entity that meets the specified requirements to administer an entrepreneurship program.

Finally, the bill allows a member of the Veterans Florida board of directors to be reappointed to the board and serve two terms of four years each.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2018.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 115-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

HB 75 — Postsecondary Fee Waivers

by Rep. Ponder and others (SB 460 by Senators Gainer, Broxson, and Taddeo)

The bill (Chapter 2018-8, L.O.F.) authorizes Florida College System (FCS) institutions to waive certain fees for active duty servicemembers utilizing the U.S. Department of Defense Military Tuition Assistance (MTA) program. The MTA program is a benefit paid to eligible servicemembers for tuition expenses at postsecondary education institutions. Previously, the MTA program covered both tuition and fees, but in 2014, the MTA program instructions were modified to limit coverage of the benefit to tuition only.

Specifically, the bill allows a FCS institution to waive any portion of the following fees for an active duty servicemember using MTA:

- Student activity and service fee;
- Financial aid fee;
- Technology fee;
- Capital improvement fee; and
- Any other fees authorized in s. 1009.23, F.S.

Each FCS institution must report the number and value of all fee waivers granted annually to the State Board of Education.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2018.

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 113-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

SB 100 — Taxes and Fees for Veterans and Low Income Persons

by Senator Steube

The bill creates an exemption from local business taxes for the following individuals:

- Honorably discharged veterans and their spouses;
- Unremarried surviving spouses of honorably discharged veterans;
- Active duty military servicemembers' spouses who relocate to the county or municipality pursuant to a permanent change of station order;
- Low-income individuals receiving public assistance, as defined in s. 403.2554, F.S.; and
- Low-income individuals with a household income less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level based on the current year's federal poverty guidelines.

To receive the exemption, an individual must complete and sign, under penalty of perjury, a Request for Fee Exemption, furnished by the local governing authority, and provide written documentation in support of the request for the exemption.

The bill allows any municipality that imposes a business tax on merchants measured by gross receipts from the sale of merchandise, services, or both, to continue imposing such tax. As authorized in the bill, a municipality may change, by ordinance, the definition of the term "merchant," which may allow a municipality to grant an exemption to an eligible individual, if the governing body chooses to do so.

Additionally, the bill eliminates the \$1 and \$2 fee a veteran must pay to have the word "Veteran" displayed on an identification card or driver license issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV). The bill also expands the forms of identification a veteran may present to the DHSMV to obtain the "Veteran" designation on an identification card or driver license.

Lastly, the bill prohibits tax collectors from charging a veteran the \$6.25 service fee for driver license services rendered pursuant to ch. 322, F.S., upon presentation of specified documentation proving an individual is a veteran.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2018.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 117-0

Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

CS/HB 333 — Minimum Officer Qualifications

by Criminal Justice Subcommittee and Rep. Burgess and others (CS/CS/SB 470 by Appropriations Committee; Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee; and Senator Stargel)

The bill exempts individuals who served in the special operations forces of the U.S. military from completing the basic recruit training program for law enforcement, correctional, or correctional probation officers. To qualify for the exemption, an applicant must have served in the special operations forces for a minimum of five years and must apply for the exemption within four years of separating from the special operations forces.

The bill defines “special operations forces” to include servicemembers of the Army Special Forces and Army 75th Ranger Regiment; the Navy SEALs and Special Warfare Combatant-Craft Crewmen; the Air Force Combat Control, Pararescue, and Tactical Air Control Party specialists; the Marine Corps Critical Skills Operators; and any other component of the U.S. Special Operations Command approved by the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (Commission).

An applicant who served in the special operations forces and is exempt from completing a basic recruit training program must also meet the minimum officer qualifications prescribed in s. 943.13, F.S., such as passing a physical examination and having good moral character. Additionally, an exempt applicant must demonstrate proficiency in high-liability areas and pass the officer certification examination within 1 year of receiving the exemption, and complete any additional training required by the Commission, based on the applicant’s prior training and experience.

The bill directs the Commission to adopt rules that establish the criteria and procedures to determine if an applicant is exempt from completing a basic recruit training program.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2018.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 109-1