

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

CS/HB 357 — Special Observances

by State Affairs Committee and Rep. Holcomb and others (CS/SB 346 by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee and Senators Ingoglia, Yarborough, and Collins)

This bill replaces “Veterans Week” with “Veterans Appreciation Month.” The bill provides that the Governor may annually issue a proclamation that designates the month of November as Veterans Appreciation Month and encourages counties, municipalities, public schools, and residents to observe the occasion with special programs and events in appreciation of veterans.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 117-0

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

SB 548 — Public Records/Military Personnel and their Spouses and Dependents

by Senator Collins

This bill provides a public records exemption on certain identifying information of military personnel and their families held by an agency. The exemption applies to the home address, phone numbers, and date of birth of current and former military personnel and their spouses and dependents, and the name and location of a school attended by such a spouse and schools or day care facilities attended by such dependents. Military personnel are either persons employed by the Department of Defense who have access to information designated as secret or top secret or servicemembers of a special operations force. The information is made exempt, meaning that the records custodian has discretion to disclose it. To receive the exemption, a request must be made in writing and include a statement of reasonable efforts to protect the information from access. The exemption applies to information held by the agency before, on, or after the effective date of the bill.

The public records exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will be repealed on October 2, 2029, unless reenacted before that date.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming a law.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 114-0

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

HB 725 — Veterans' Long-term Care Facilities Admissions

by Reps. Woodson, Snyder, and others (SB 174 by Senators Burgess and Collins)

This bill expands the eligibility for admission to a veterans' domiciliary home to include a spouse or surviving spouse of a qualifying veteran. The bill revises the priority order for admissions to a veterans' domiciliary home to rank a spouse or surviving spouse of a qualifying veteran in 5th place, thereby preserving the priority admission of a qualifying veteran over a nonveteran.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 117-0

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

SB 818 — Military Leave

by Senators Avila and Collins

Currently a public employer must provide an employee or official who is a servicemember a full paid leave of absence for the first 30 days of active federal military service. The bill limits application of the paid leave of absence to a servicemember who is activated under federal military service that is equal to or greater than 90 consecutive days.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 113-0

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

CS/SB 968 — Spaceport Territory

by Rules Committee and Senators Calatayud and Trumbull

The bill revises the definition of “spaceport discretionary capacity improvement projects” to mean capacity improvements that enhance space transportation capacity at any spaceport or on spaceport territory. The bill removes the requirement that a spaceport or spaceport territory must have had at least one orbital flight or suborbital flight within the previous calendar year or have an agreement in writing for installation of one or more regularly scheduled orbital or suborbital flights for the commitment of funds for spaceport discretionary capacity improvement projects.

In addition, the bill broadens the scope of the strategic space infrastructure investment funding eligibility and authorizes the Florida Department of Transportation, in consultation with Space Florida, to fund spaceport discretionary capacity improvement projects, instead of strategic spaceport launch facilities, at up to 100 percent of the project’s cost. The revised eligibility criteria includes the provision that the project provide important access and on-spaceport-territory space transportation capacity improvements.

The bill expands spaceport territory to include certain real property in Miami-Dade County consisting of property which was formerly included within the boundaries of Homestead Air Force Base and is included in the Homestead Air Reserve Base or deeded to Miami-Dade County or the City of Homestead. The bill also delineates the Homestead Air Force Base property.

The bill also expands spaceport territory to include certain real property in Bay County which is included within the boundaries of Tyndall Air Force Base.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 111-0

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

HB 1227 — Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day

by Reps. Antone, Bankson, and others (SB 1312 by Senators Torres and Rouson)

This bill designates Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day as a legal holiday, which occurs annually on the fourth Thursday in March.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 115-0

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

CS/CS/HB 1329 — Veterans

by State Affairs Committee; Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee; and Reps. Redondo, Alvarez, and others (CS/SB 408 by Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development and Senators Burgess, Perry, and Collins)

The bill designates the Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) to serve as the initial point of military transition assistance and to conduct marketing and outreach to its target market. U.S. Armed Forces servicemembers with 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, members of the Florida National Guard or reserve, and their spouses or surviving spouses who have not remarried are the target market.

The bill increases Veterans Florida's board of directors from 9 to 11 members, with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appointing one from their presiding body to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members.

The amendment revises the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to:

- Match the target market with target and secondary industry businesses and grants;
- Encourage entrepreneurship and grow veteran-owned small businesses;
- Authorize prioritizing of grant funds for training, certification, and licenses;
- Provide that a participating business may also receive a grant under any state program; and
- Authorize Veterans Florida to assist state agencies in recruiting veteran talent into their workforce and maximize veteran access to benefits, services, training, and education.

The bill also:

- Creates a fee exemption on hunting and fishing license fees for honorably discharged veterans with a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or more.
- Increases the membership of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries from 16 to 18 members to add two members who are veterans who have or have had brain injuries, or their family members.
- Requires public school instruction on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.
- Creates and funds the Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans' History Program to record the stories of Florida's veterans and preserve them for future generations, and appropriates one position and \$91,207 in recurring funds to implement and administer the program.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-0

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

CS/CS/HB 1567 — Qualifications for County Emergency Management Directors

by State Affairs Committee; Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations Subcommittee; and Rep. Grant and others (CS/CS/SB 1262 by Rules Committee; Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee; and Senator Collins)

The bill establishes minimum training, experience, and education standards for all county emergency management directors, including the following:

- Fifty hours of training in business or public administration, business or public management, or emergency management or preparedness. A bachelor's degree may be substituted for this training requirement.
- Four years of specified experience in comprehensive emergency management services with direct supervisory responsibility for responding to at least one emergency or disaster. A master's degree in certain fields may be substituted for 2 years of the required experience but not for the required supervisory experience. Alternatively, certain professional accreditation may substitute for the required experience if the certification remains in good standing until the actual time and experience requirements are met.
- Completion of 150 hours in comprehensive emergency management training provided through or approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or its successor, including completion of certain National Incident Management System courses, or equivalent FEMA courses through the Emergency Management Institute. A county emergency management director must have completed this training within the 10 years preceding the date of initial appointment or reappointment.

The bill provides that a county emergency management director who does not satisfy these training or certification requirements will have until June 30, 2026, to meet the new criteria.

The bill also requires that a county emergency management director have a valid driver license, and if the license is not a Florida driver license, the director must obtain a Florida driver license within 30 days after being appointed.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-1