

The Florida Senate
COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA
**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, SPACE, AND
DOMESTIC SECURITY**
Senator Wright, Chair

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 14, 2025
TIME: 9:00—10:30 a.m.
PLACE: 301 Senate Building

MEMBERS: Senator Wright, Chair; Senators Burgess, Jones, Sharief, and Truenow

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	Presentation by the Department of Veterans' Affairs on Veteran Outreach, Benefit Assistance and Status of State Veterans' Homes		Presented
2	Presentation by the Division of Emergency Management on Operations and Response to Emergencies and Natural Disasters		Presented
Other Related Meeting Documents			



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.

***Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic
Security Committee Meeting***

October 14, 2025

Major General James S. Hartsell, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)
Executive Director

Our Statutory Mission



Serving as the premier point of entry for Florida Veterans, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs operates a network of nine State Veterans' Homes & provides statewide outreach to connect Veterans and their families with earned services, benefits, and support.

Why We Serve



“Nation’s 2nd Largest Veteran Population, behind Texas.”

- ✓ 1,400,000 Total Veterans
 - ✓ 172,000 Women Veterans
- ✓ 692,000 Veterans age 65+
- ✓ 504,000 service-connected disabled Veterans
- ✓ 3,800 World War II
- ✓ 36,400 Korean War
- ✓ 406,000 Vietnam War
- ✓ 681,000 Gulf War Era to include Post-9/11
- ✓ 769,000 “Veteran” designations on Driver License & ID Card

State Veterans' Homes



FDVA STATE VETERANS' HOMES

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 ROBERT H. JENKINS JR.
LAKE CITY | 6 DOUGLAS T. JACOBSON
PORT CHARLOTTE |
| 2 EMORY L. BENNETT
DAYTONA BEACH | 7 CLYDE E. LASSEN
ST. AUGUSTINE |
| 3 BALDOMERO LOPEZ
LAND O' LAKES | 8 ARDIE R. COPAS
PORT ST. LUCIE |
| 4 ALEXANDER "SANDY" NININGER
PEMBROKE PINES | 9 ALWYN C. CASHE
ORLANDO |
| 5 CLIFFORD C. SIMS
PANAMA CITY | 10 FUTURE LOCATION
10. Collier County |

FDVA OFFICES

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| A FDVA TALLAHASSEE
OFFICE | B FDVA HEADQUARTERS
& EXECUTIVE OFFICES
LARGO | C FDVA BENEFITS &
ASSISTANCE DIVISION
BAY PINES |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|



State Veterans' Homes



- Providing 1,102 skilled nursing & assisted living beds in nine facilities.
- 1,300 State Veterans' Home staff members providing 24/7 quality, compassionate care.

Collier County State Veterans' Nursing Home



- 120-bed skilled nursing facility with memory care
- Adult Day Health Care for 40 Veterans daily
- Outpatient Therapy
- Community Wellness Center
- 2026 Groundbreaking



Veterans' Outreach



Calendar Year 2024 Summary

- State Veterans' Service Officers assisted more than 245,000 Florida Veterans in providing information and counsel on earned services, benefits, and support.
- State Veterans' Service Officers processed nearly 44,000 new claims on behalf of Florida Veterans and helped recover nearly \$260 million in retroactive benefits for Veterans and their families.

Veterans' Outreach



- Disability and Pension
- Access to Health Care
- Property Tax Relief
- Education Benefits

FDVA.VSO@FDVA.FL.GOV
727-319-7440

FloridaVets.org



Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame

- Class of 2025 Induction Ceremony on Nov. 6 at 10 a.m. in the Cabinet Room, Capitol
- *Lieutenant Colonel Marlené Carter, U.S. Army (Ret)*
- *Captain Robert Crippen, U.S. Navy (Ret)*
- *Captain Stephen Petty, U.S. Army (Ret)*
- *Lieutenant Colonel Alicia Rossiter, U.S. Army / U.S. Air Force (Ret)*
- *Colonel Peter Tan, U.S. Army (Ret)*



U.S. Marine Corps 250th Anniversary



- Established Nov. 10, 1775
- Cake Cutting Ceremony scheduled at each State Capitol
- Florida's ceremony on Nov. 12 at 11 a.m. in Capitol's 4th Floor Rotunda

Veterans' Mental Health



New number. Same support.
Dial 988 then Press 1



SaveFLVets.org



Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide



- 175,000 copies distributed statewide in 2025
- 2026 edition shipped in January to coincide with 2026 Florida Legislative Session.
- Printing & mailing costs courtesy of the *Florida Veterans Foundation*.

Monthly Veterans' Newsletter



- Free email subscription newsletter from FDVA
- 67,000 active subscribers
- Subscribe at FloridaVets.org



Veteran Legislation Point of Contact

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Honoring those who served U.S.



Questions

10/14/2025

Meeting Date

Military and Veterans Affairs, Space and Domestic Security

Committee

The Florida Senate
APPEARANCE RECORD

Deliver both copies of this form to
Senate professional staff conducting the meeting

DUPLICATE

Agency Update

Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Name Major General James Hartsell Phone (727)518-3202 EXT 5587

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Street

Largo FL 33778
City State Zip

Speaking: ☐ For ☐ Against ☒ Information **OR** Waive Speaking: ☐ In Support ☐ Against

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

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compensation or sponsorship.

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representing:

☐ I am not a lobbyist, but received
something of value for my appearance
(travel, meals, lodging, etc.),
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While it is a tradition to encourage public testimony, time may not permit all persons wishing to speak to be heard at this hearing. Those who do speak may be asked to limit their remarks so that as many persons as possible can be heard. If you have questions about registering to lobby please see Fla. Stat. §11.045 and Joint Rule 1. [2020-2022 Joint Rules.pdf \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

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

S-001 (08/10/2021)



Operations and Response to Emergencies and Natural Disasters

Florida Division of Emergency Management

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

October 14, 2025



AGENDA



State Emergency Response Team



Recovery Efforts



Elevate Florida



Division of Emergency Management Enterprise Solution (DEMES)



Web-Based (Web) Emergency Operations Center (EOC)



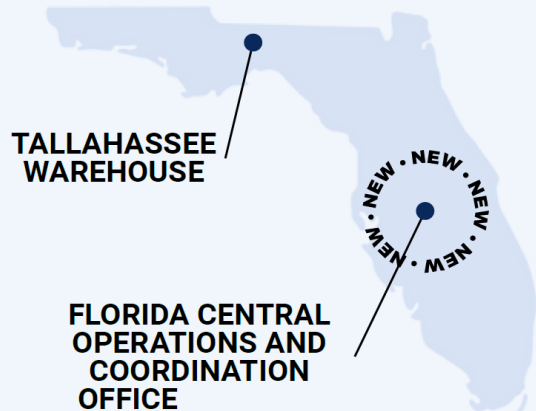
STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (SERT)



FLORIDA CENTRAL OPERATIONS AND COORDINATION OFFICE

660 Fred C. Jones Blvd, Auburndale, FL – On August 1, 2025, FDEM moved into its state of the art new warehouse, replacing the older State Logistics Response Center and Lakeland warehouses.

The state owned facility enhances statewide situational awareness and streamlines resource distribution and interagency communication among the agency and its partners.



Total Square Feet
421,600

Percent Capacity
91% Utilization

Primary Contents
Food, water, flood prevention resources, and generators

Heavy Equipment
Utility vehicles, forklifts, skid steers

Daily Personnel Count
21 staff and growing

Activation Personnel Count
300+ depending on the size and scope of activation



NEW STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Florida is constructing a new State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee, located in Southwood, which is on track to open Spring, 2026.

- Permanent power completion ongoing.
- Voice and data cabling ongoing.
- Furniture install began 10/01/25.

Key Features of the New SEOC

<i>Increased Capacity</i>	The new SEOC will have space for approximately 220 people on the main floor, more than double the capacity in the current SEOC of around 80, fostering better collaboration between state agencies and partners.
<i>Enhanced Resilience</i>	Designed to withstand winds up to 200 mph, ensuring continuity of operations during severe weather.
<i>Improved Coordination</i>	Will facilitate crucial conversations and communication, improving disaster response coordination for a range of emergencies, including hurricanes, floods, and hazardous materials incidents.
<i>Future-Oriented Design</i>	Outfitted with enhanced technology solutions to accommodate future growth and changing needs in the field of emergency management.





RECOVERY



HURRICANE MILTON– OCTOBER 9, 2024

Ongoing: RECOVERY

- **State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program**
 - Survivors in **52** counties had homes impacted by both Helene and Milton.
 - **Over 1,100** displaced households sheltered.
 - **Over 1,400** travel trailers donated to local jurisdictions and non-profit partners.
- **Volunteer Village**
 - Sarasota County – At its peak, provided lodging for up to **250** volunteers to serve surrounding impacted communities.
- **Public Assistance**
 - Obligated: **\$1.2 billion**
 - In Development: **\$998.1 million**





HURRICANE HELENE– SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

Ongoing: RECOVERY

- **Debris Task Force**

- Following Hurricane Helene and prior to Hurricane Milton, the Debris Task Force quickly coordinated with local officials on how to better address the counties' needs.
- As of September 2025, more than **31.6 million cubic yards** of debris have been reported as removed statewide for Helene and Milton.

- **Public Assistance**

- Obligated: **\$625.6 million**
- In Development: **\$524.7 million**





HURRICANE DEBBY– AUGUST 5, 2024

Ongoing: RECOVERY & MITIGATION

- **Public Assistance**
 - Obligated: **\$181.6 million**
 - In Development: **\$74.2 million**
- **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program**
 - It is currently estimated that the state will receive **\$45.4 million** in hazard mitigation funding to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures in communities impacted by Hurricane Debby.





HURRICANE IDALIA – AUGUST 27, 2023

RECOVERY

- **State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program (Complete)**
 - Survivors in **18** counties impacted by Hurricane Idalia were eligible to apply for sheltering assistance from the State of Florida.
 - **128 Households** received sheltering assistance with **45** households placed in hotel rooms and **83** households placed in travel trailers.

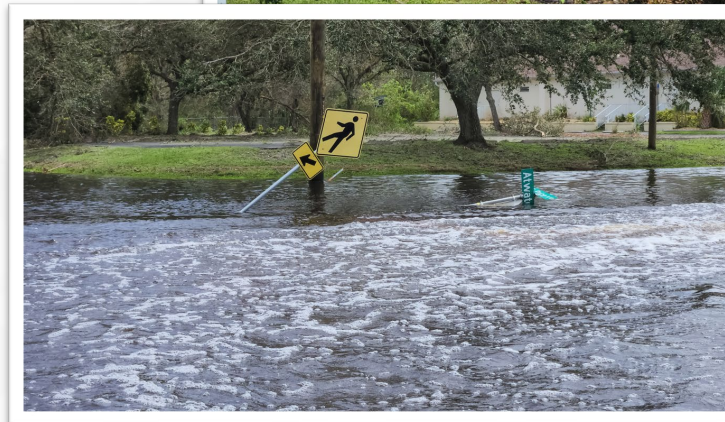




HURRICANE IAN – SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

RECOVERY

- **State Non-Congregate Sheltering Program (Complete)**
 - Survivors in **26** counties impacted by Hurricane Ian were eligible to apply for sheltering assistance from the State of Florida.
 - **1,175 Households** received sheltering assistance with placement in travel trailers at their damaged dwellings or a nearby commercial park location.
- **State Home Repair Connection (SHRC) Program (Complete)**
 - Over **970** Ian impacted Florida homes received no-cost habitability repairs via a public private partnership between Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs), Volunteer Florida, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to enable residents to return to their home.
 - The average value of these repairs was **\$16,132**, and the average construction time to repair a home was **22 days**.





PUBLIC ASSISTANCE DISASTERS

RECOVERY PUBLIC ASSISTANCE LEGACY DISASTER TOTALS

- **Hurricane Irma (2017)**
 - Obligated: **\$2.6 billion**
 - In Development: **\$23.8 million**
- **Hurricane Michael (2018)**
 - Obligated: **\$2.4 billion**
 - In Development: **\$30 million**
- **Hurricane Dorian (2019)**
 - Obligated: **\$125.7 million**
 - In Development: **\$23.8 million**
- **Hurricane Sally (2020)**
 - Obligated: **\$224.2 million**
 - In Development: **\$29.6 million**
- **Hurricane Ian (2022)**
 - Obligated: **\$2.7 billion**
 - In Development: **\$868 million**
- **Hurricane Nicole (2022)**
 - Obligated: **\$135.1 million**
 - In Development: **\$76.1 million**
- **Hurricane Idalia (2023)**
 - Obligated: **\$419.5 million**
 - In Development: **\$181 million**



FLORIDA RECOVERY OBLIGATION CALCULATION (F-ROC)

- F-ROC is a program that implements a **standardized approach** to FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) process.
- Reducing risk of noncompliance** with federal program requirements and helping communities **Prepare to Recover**.

Executive Overview of Key Achievements

Not Started **170**
In Draft **116**
Under Review **32**



2026 Disaster Readiness
Assessment (DRA)

24+

Conferences and
engagements to share
F-ROC message

1

F R O C
PREPARE TO RECOVER™

Trademarked Logo



300+

Live and virtual training
sessions across the state

180+

Communications drafted for the
Florida Public Assistance Community

Total Entities 2024 **228**
Opted-In 2025 **442**
Following Pilot (2023) 2026 **501***
*estimated

F-ROC Forms **83**

Courses **50**

Rocky Videos **41**

One Pagers **36**

Total Resources Developed

3700+

Training participants
across the state





ELEVATE FLORIDA



ELEVATE FLORIDA PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

ELEVATE
FLORIDA

Elevate Florida is a **first-of-its-kind**, groundbreaking statewide residential mitigation program designed to improve the resilience of homes and communities across the state. The program is funded by two Federal Emergency Management Agency grants: the **Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Swift Current** and the **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**. More than 12,000 Floridians have applied for assistance through Elevate Florida. Based on current funding levels, Elevate Florida will **assist 1,500-2,000 property owners**.

Funding Breakdown

Elevate Florida expanded its mitigation efforts by partnering with 37 counties that contributed a portion of their HMGP allocations to the State. Elevate Florida funds are being used to help more Floridians protect their homes, with each county's allocation benefiting its own residents.

Funding	Amount
Swift Current	\$100,000,000
HMGP – County Allocations	\$150,344,964
HMGP – State Allocations	\$105,449,229
Total	\$355,794,193

Note: Funding is based on preliminary estimates (six-month federal funding lock-in amounts).



ELEVATE FLORIDA PROGRAM STATUS

Jul

On July 16, 2025, 295 Swift Current properties were submitted to FEMA under Elevate Florida.

Aug

The program has completed HMGP project prioritization and notified all applicants of their status. More than 600 homeowners will advance, pending submission of signed forms and inspection cost-share. 300 properties have been placed on the waitlist and may move forward if spots open due to withdrawals.

Fall
2025

As HMGP applicants submit their agreements and inspection cost-share, inspections are being scheduled and completed in batches. By late October, the first batch of HMGP applications will be submitted for funding determination.

Winter
2025

The program anticipates breaking ground and beginning construction on projects as soon as FEMA awards are received.

ELEVATE
FLORIDA



DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENTERPRISE SOLUTION (DEMES)



DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENTERPRISE SOLUTION (DEMES)

- **DEMES** is a modern, cloud-based platform designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all Florida Division of Emergency Management's (FDEM) operations.
- Built on Salesforce, **DEMES** integrates the agency's separated manual and computer systems that did not directly communicate with one another, combining them into a unified system that increases the speed, accuracy, and transparency of all FDEM and partner agency actions.
- **DEMES** offers both internal applications for FDEM staff and external portals for partners, enabling effective communication and collaboration.

DEMES Objectives



**Integrate Systems
and Modernize
Processes**



**Streamline Operations
and Improve Accuracy**



**Establish Case
Management and
Real-Time Visibility**



**Provide Just-in-
Time Support**



**Enhance Data
Visualization and
Reporting**

DEMES Benefits



Improved Time Management

Whether in the field or at the office, staff no longer need to devote time to manually completing forms, tracking statuses, drafting communications, routing documents, or obtaining approvals via email.



Enhanced System Automation

DEMES seamlessly integrates with all processes and systems within FDEM, offering enhanced and real-time information to aid in decision-making and resource management.



Minimizing Manual Tasks

Numerous email-driven requests, forms, approval processes, and communications have been integrated into DEMES, allowing for manual tasks to be either automated or conveniently modified within the system.



WEB-BASED (WEB) EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)



WEBEOC STATUS UPDATE

What is WebEOC?

- WebEOC is a web-based information management system.
- This platform allows the **State Emergency Response Team (SERT)** to use the same volunteer, and mutual aid entities, to use the same operating environment when responding to and recovering from and emergency.
- The goal for FDEM statewide WebEOC initiative is to provide the opportunity for all of Florida Counties to utilize WebEOC.

WebEOC Benefits



Information Storage

WebEOC creates a system of record for both county and state agencies. This allows for a historical depository database for utilization in after action reviews and improvement plans.



Free up County Funding

Statewide WebEOC integration allows for county emergency management agencies to free up funding for additional needed emergency preparedness utilization.



Streamline Data Management

WebEOC minimizes the local burden of technology management by streamlining data sharing between cities, counties, and FDEM. Statewide integration improves coordination at all levels of government during a disaster.

WebEOC Statewide Initiative



Opted in Counties: **60**



Opted in Colleges and Universities: **22**



Thank You

Meigs Lamb

Phone: 850-566-1899

Email: Meigs.Lamb@em.myflorida.com

The Florida Senate

APPEARANCE RECORD

Deliver both copies of this form to
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Bill Number or Topic

Amendment Barcode (if applicable)

Meeting Date

10/15/2025
Military Affairs

Committee

Name

Kevin Coughrie

Phone

Address

2555 Shumard Oak Blvd

Email

Street

Tallahassee

City

FL

State

32311

Zip

Speaking:

☐

For

☐

Against

☐

Information

OR

Waive Speaking:

☐

In Support

☐

Against

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S-001 (08/10/2021)

CourtSmart Tag Report

Room: SB 301

Case No.:

Type:

Caption: Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

Judge:

Started: 10/14/2025 9:00:44 AM

Ends: 10/14/2025 10:27:49 AM **Length:** 01:27:06

9:00:46 AM Chair Wright calls meeting to order

9:00:51 AM Roll call by CAA

9:01:00 AM Quorum announced

9:01:07 AM Pledge of Allegiance led by Senator Burgess

9:01:26 AM Chair with opening comments

9:02:02 AM Tab 1 Presentation by Major General James Hartsell, Department of Veterans' Affairs on Veteran Outreach, Benefit Assistance and Status of State Veterans' Homes

9:02:15 AM Major General Hartsell presents

9:18:26 AM

9:18:31 AM Chair Wright

9:18:44 AM Senator Sharief

9:19:12 AM Major General Hartsell

9:20:16 AM Senator Sharief

9:21:25 AM Senator Jones

9:22:24 AM Major General Hartsell

9:22:40 AM Major General Hartsell

9:22:46 AM Senator Jones

9:23:47 AM Senator Burgess

9:24:44 AM Major General Hartsell

9:28:42 AM Senator Sharief

9:28:48 AM Major General Hartsell

9:28:59 AM Senator Burgess

9:29:32 AM Major General Hartsell

9:29:44 AM Chair Wright

9:30:12 AM Major General Hartsell

9:31:19 AM Chair Wright

9:31:31 AM Major General Hartsell

9:31:42 AM Chair Wright

9:32:06 AM Tab 2 Presentation by Mr. Kevin Guthrie, Executive Director of the Division of Emergency Management on Operations and Response to Emergencies and Natural Disasters

9:34:00 AM Mr. Guthrie presents

10:12:11 AM Chair Wright

10:12:20 AM Senator Jones

10:13:08 AM Mr. Guthrie

10:16:12 AM Chair Wright

10:16:22 AM Mr. Guthrie

10:18:54 AM Chair Wright

10:18:58 AM Senator Burgess

10:20:32 AM Mr. Guthrie

10:27:07 AM Chair Wright

10:27:37 AM Senator Sharief moves to adjourn

10:27:44 AM Meeting Adjourned