



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR BEN ALBRITTON
President

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Senate Passes Legislation to Bolster Outreach and Support for Florida Veterans & Families
SB 116 by Senator Burgess increases access to support services, focuses on the needs of veterans

Tallahassee—The Florida Senate today passed Senate Bill (SB) 116, Veterans, by Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills), expanding support services for United States military veterans and their families. The bill enhances coordination of health care services, incorporates mental health training, and increases the availability of adult day care programs to serve veterans who require full-time care.

“The health and well-being of Florida veterans and their families is a top priority. Expanding adult day-time care opportunities for families with an elderly or disabled veteran is unfinished business from my time in the Florida House and FDVA. I know this bill will go a long way towards addressing this need in our communities,” said Senator Burgess, who previously served as Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) and currently serves as a Major in the U.S. Army Reserves. “Developing a plan for statewide expansion of adult day care facilities will support family members who work outside the home, bolster coordination of health care, and foster a community of peer support through social activities to enrich the lives of our Florida veterans.”

“Our U.S. military veterans have risked their lives in service to our country to defend and protect our freedoms,” said Senate President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula). “Returning to civilian life is a major life change, and we want to ensure Florida veterans and their families are supported during this transition. Enhanced outreach and support services, including suicide prevention training for key stakeholders, will help ensure our service members can access the resources they need in times of crisis. One veteran suicide is one too many.”

Enhancing Health Survey and Coordination

The bill expands the FDVA’s current voluntary survey of veteran needs, with a particular focus on health care to enhance veteran awareness of existing federal, state, or community programs available. This information will help the FDVA to evaluate how to help veterans take full advantage of these services. The bill also requires the FDVA to coordinate with the U.S. Department of Defense and local veterans service offices to engage servicemembers returning home to or retiring in Florida. The bill appropriates additional funds to FDVA to implement these provisions.

Expanding Mental Health Training

The bill adds mental health training to the Veteran Suicide Prevention Training Pilot Program, expanding the program to train participants to identify indicators of elevated mental health risk. The bill appropriates \$300,000 to FDVA implement the expanded pilot program.

Improving Coordination between Veterans Florida and FDVA

The bill requires the state-run non-profit Florida Is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida) to advise the FDVA when they identify specific needs of military personnel and their spouses that can be served by FDVA.

Increasing Adult Day Health Care Programs

In 2023, the Legislature authorized the FDVA to provide adult day health care programs, which assist caregivers of veterans who require around-the-clock care. The first veteran adult day care center is planned as part of the new veterans facility campus in Collier County. SB 116 takes the next step in providing adult day care options for veterans, requiring FDVA to develop a plan to establish adult day health care facilities across Florida to serve veterans and their families. The FDVA would report recommendations on the needs of veterans, where to locate these facilities, and the anticipated costs of building and operating the programs. The bill appropriates additional funds to FDVA to develop the plan.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

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