

By Senator Garcia

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to small business financial
3 assistance; creating s. 295.231, F.S.; creating the
4 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program
5 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs; directing
6 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to administer the
7 program; defining terms; authorizing the corporation
8 to accept and administer moneys appropriated for such
9 grants; specifying grant amounts; limiting the amount
10 that a small business may receive under the program;
11 requiring a small business to apply to and enter into
12 an agreement with the corporation to receive grants;
13 prescribing minimum criteria for such agreements;
14 requiring the corporation to notify the appropriate
15 regional small business development center of a small
16 business' participation; providing for termination of
17 the program; authorizing the department to adopt
18 rules; providing an appropriation; providing effective
19 dates.

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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23 Section 1. Section 295.231, Florida Statutes, is created to
24 read:

25 295.231 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.-
26 The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created
27 within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to be administered by
28 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. The purpose of the program is to
29 stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing grants
30 to small businesses that hire and employ honorably discharged
31 veterans or disabled veterans with service-connected
32 disabilities.

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33 (1) As used in this section, the term:

34 (a) "Corporation" means Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.

35 (b) "Small business" means an independently owned and
36 operated, for-profit, privately held business that employs 200
37 or fewer persons; generates \$2 million or less in annual
38 revenue; and has maintained its principal place of business in
39 this state for at least the previous 4 calendar years.

40 (2) The corporation may accept and administer moneys
41 appropriated to the department, for transfer to the corporation,
42 to provide grants to encourage small businesses in this state to
43 hire and employ veterans.

44 (3) A small business that initially hires a veteran on or
45 after October 1, 2017 as an employee may receive a one-time
46 grant of:

47 (a) Three thousand dollars per newly hired veteran, as
48 defined in s. 1.01(14).

49 (b) Five thousand dollars for each newly hired disabled
50 veteran, as that term is described in s. 295.07(1)(a)1.

51 (4) The total of grants awarded to a participating small
52 business under subsection (3) may not exceed \$25,000 per fiscal
53 year.

54 (5) A small business must apply to and enter into an
55 agreement with the corporation in order to participate in the
56 program. The agreement must require that the small business:

57 (a) Employ a qualifying veteran for at least 1 year before
58 becoming eligible for a grant awarded under subsection (3).

59 (b) Report information regarding the employment status of
60 each qualifying veteran, if requested to do so by the
61 corporation.

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62 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least
63 80 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this
64 state, based on the most recent federal census or the most
65 recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates published by
66 the United States Census Bureau.

67 (d) Use any awarded grant moneys to facilitate the small
68 business' creation of additional jobs for and employment of
69 veterans; however, grant moneys may be used only for
70 manufacturing, equipment, and facility expenses or other
71 operating costs or fixed capital outlay projects.

72 (e) Not receive an additional grant for rehiring a veteran
73 previously claimed as an employee by the same small business for
74 purposes of obtaining funds under the program.

75 (f) Is eligible to receive a grant award only for a veteran
76 initially hired on or after October 1, 2017.

77 (6) The corporation shall notify the regional small
78 business development center that serves the county in which a
79 participating small business is located of the small business'
80 participation in the grant program in order to facilitate
81 improved access to the resources of the Florida Small Business
82 Development Center Network.

83 (7) The grant program terminates on the date that all funds
84 appropriated for the program are expended or on October 1, 2027,
85 whichever occurs first.

86 (8) The Department of Veterans' Affairs may adopt rules to
87 implement and administer this section, including, but not
88 limited to, rules specifying requirements for the application
89 and approval process and the documentation necessary to claim
90 grant moneys awarded under this section.

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91 Section 2. Effective July 1, 2017, for the 2017-2018 fiscal
92 year, the sum of \$10 million in nonrecurring funds from the
93 General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Department of
94 Veterans' Affairs for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.,
95 to implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small
96 Business Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys
97 up to a maximum of \$900,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may
98 spend up to \$100,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the
99 department for staffing and administrative costs associated with
100 implementation and administration of the program. If any
101 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,
102 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the
103 Department of Veterans' Affairs to revert to the General Revenue
104 Fund.

105 Section 3. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this
106 act and except for this section, which shall take effect July 1,
107 2017, this act shall take effect October 1, 2017.