

By Senator Garcia

36-00095-18

2018104\_\_

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 Economic Opportunity;  
6       directing Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to administer  
7       the program; defining terms; authorizing the  
8       corporation to accept and administer moneys  
9       appropriated for such grants; specifying grant  
10      amounts; limiting the amount that a small business may  
11      receive under the program; requiring a small business  
12      to apply to and enter into an agreement with the  
13      corporation to receive grants; prescribing minimum  
14      criteria for such agreements; requiring the  
15      corporation to notify the appropriate regional small  
16      business development center of a small business'  
17      participation; authorizing the department to adopt  
18      rules; prescribing reporting requirements; providing  
19      for termination of the program; providing  
20      appropriations; providing an effective date.

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

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

26       295.231 Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program.-  
27       The Veterans Employment Small Business Grant Program is created  
28       within the Department of Economic Opportunity to be administered  
29       by Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. The purpose of the program is

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30 to stimulate investment in the state's economy by providing  
31 grants to small businesses that hire and employ honorably  
32 discharged veterans or disabled veterans with service-connected  
33 disabilities.

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

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

36 (b) "Small business" means an independently owned and  
37 operated, for-profit, privately held business that employs 50 or  
38 fewer persons; generates \$1 million or less in annual revenue;  
39 and has maintained its principal place of business in this state  
40 for at least the previous 4 calendar years.

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

45 (3) A small business that initially hires a veteran on or  
46 after July 1, 2018, as an employee may receive a one-time grant  
47 of:

48 (a) Fifteen hundred dollars per newly hired veteran, as  
49 defined in s. 1.01(14).

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

52 (4) The total dollar amount of grants awarded to a  
53 participating small business under subsection (3) may not exceed  
54 \$10,500 per fiscal year.

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

58 (a) Employ a qualifying veteran for at least 1 year before

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59 becoming eligible for a grant awarded under subsection (3).

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

63 (c) Pay each qualifying veteran an amount equal to at least  
64 90 percent of the annual median income for veterans in this  
65 state, based on the most recent federal census or the most  
66 recent American Community Survey 5-year estimates published by  
67 the United States Census Bureau.

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

73 (e) Receive no additional grant for rehiring a veteran  
74 previously claimed as an employee by the same small business for  
75 purposes of obtaining funds under the program.

76 (f) Is eligible to receive a grant award only for a veteran  
77 initially hired on or after July 1, 2018.

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

84 (7) The Department of Economic Opportunity may adopt rules  
85 to implement and administer this section, including, but not  
86 limited to, rules specifying requirements for the application  
87 and approval process and the documentation necessary to claim

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88 grant moneys awarded under this section.

89 (8) By December 31, 2021, the corporation shall provide a  
90 report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the  
91 Speaker of the House of Representatives on the grant program's  
92 progress and outcomes for the preceding 3 fiscal years. The  
93 report must include aggregate information on the total number of  
94 veterans and small businesses assisted by the program; an  
95 accounting of how the corporation used the state funds it  
96 received for the grant program; and a description of the nature  
97 of the participation in the program by the Florida Small  
98 Business Development Center Network. The report must also  
99 contain specific information on the number of small businesses  
100 receiving grant funds; the number of veterans employed by each  
101 small business receiving grant funds; the salary paid to each  
102 veteran employed; the length of time the small business employed  
103 each veteran; the grant program's economic benefit to the state;  
104 and all performance-based metrics and methodologies used to  
105 calculate the grant program's economic benefit to the state.

106 (9) The grant program terminates July 1, 2023.

107 Section 2. Beginning July 1, 2018, and for the 2018-2019  
108 through the 2022-2023 fiscal years, the sum of \$500,000 in  
109 nonrecurring funds from the State Economic Enhancement and  
110 Development Trust Fund is appropriated to the Department of  
111 Economic Opportunity for transfer to Florida Is For Veterans,  
112 Inc., to contract with the Department of Economic Opportunity to  
113 implement and administer the Veterans Employment Small Business  
114 Grant Program. The corporation may award grant moneys up to a  
115 maximum of \$500,000 per fiscal year. The corporation may spend  
116 up to \$25,000 per fiscal year of funds transferred by the

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117 department for staffing and administrative costs associated with  
118 implementation and administration of the program. If any  
119 appropriated funds remain upon termination of the program,  
120 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall transfer those funds to the  
121 Department of Economic Opportunity for deposit in the State  
122 Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund.

123 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.