

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

**BILL #:** CS/CS/HB 1329 Veterans

**SPONSOR(S):** State Affairs Committee, Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts  
Subcommittee, Redondo, Alvarez and others

**TIED BILLS:** **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** CS/SB 1666

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	Mwakyanjala	Darden
2) Appropriations Committee	26 Y, 0 N	Aderibigbe	Pridgeon
3) State Affairs Committee	20 Y, 0 N, As CS	Mwakyanjala	Williamson

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) provides statewide outreach to connect veterans with services, benefits, and support. FDVA utilizes the non-profit corporation Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida) to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state and administers the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program (program), which connects veterans with employers.

The Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries (Council) is created within the Department of Health and administers the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, whose purpose is to provide all eligible residents who sustain a brain or spinal cord injury with health care services.

The Department of State's Division of Arts and Culture (Division) is the state's arts agency and promotes access to cultural opportunities through various programs and grants.

The bill revises provisions relating to veterans and the transition of veterans to civilian life by:

- Creating the Florida Veterans' History Program within the Division.
- Expanding employment outreach, marketing, and support services activities of Veterans Florida.
- Revising the appointment process for the governing board of Veterans Florida.
- Providing definitions for terms used in law relating to Veterans Florida and the program.
- Revising the duties of Veterans Florida relating to the administration of the program.
- Allowing an educational stipend for veterans while training at specified locations.
- Expanding the role of Veterans Florida in assisting with industry certification.
- Prohibiting the Department of State from charging certain veterans various filing fees.
- Creating an exemption from fees related to hunting and fishing licenses and permits for certain disabled veterans.
- Requiring middle and high school students to receive instruction on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.

The bill also revises the appointment process for and membership of the Council, and requires the Council to meet quarterly.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state.

# FULL ANALYSIS

## I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

### A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

#### Present Situation

##### SkillBridge Program

The Department of Defense (DoD) SkillBridge program grants servicemembers<sup>1</sup> an opportunity to “gain valuable civilian work experience through specific industry training, apprenticeships, or internships” by matching civilian opportunities to a servicemember’s job training and work experience.<sup>2</sup> The goal of providing these opportunities is to enhance the servicemember’s marketability and post-separation career prospects following separation from duty.<sup>3</sup> Servicemembers are eligible for the program regardless of rank. Military spouses and veterans may also participate in programs with some partners; however, DoD will not provide pay, allowances, benefits, or other program support to the military spouse or veteran.<sup>4</sup>

The servicemember is permitted to use up to the last 180 days of service to train and learn with an industry partner that best matches that applicant’s job training and work experience. The training must offer the servicemember a high probability of employment. Throughout the SkillBridge program partnership, the servicemember continues to receive military compensation and benefits. Eligibility for the SkillBridge program is mission-dependent and must be authorized by the unit commander prior to entering into any agreement with interested industry employment partners.<sup>5</sup>

##### Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs

The Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs (FDVA) is a constitutionally chartered department<sup>6</sup> with a budget of \$201 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24.<sup>7</sup> FDVA is required to assist all former, present, and future members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their spouses and dependents in preparing claims for and securing such compensation, hospitalization, career training, and other benefits or privileges to which such persons are entitled to under federal or state law.<sup>8</sup> FDVA operates a network of nine state veterans’ homes and provides statewide outreach to connect veterans and their spouses with services, benefits, and support.<sup>9</sup>

##### *Florida is for Veterans, Inc.*

Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida),<sup>10</sup> a non-profit corporation within FDVA, was created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.<sup>11</sup> Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence, helps equip

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<sup>1</sup> The term “servicemember” is generally referred to as being on “active duty.” 10 USC s. 101 defines “active duty” as full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. The term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance, while in the active military service. The term does not include full-time National Guard duty.

<sup>2</sup> Dept. of Defense, SkillBridge, *Program Overview*, <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/program-overview.htm> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Dept. of Defense, SkillBridge, *Military Members*, <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/military-members.htm> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Dept. of Defense, SkillBridge, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/faq.htm> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>5</sup> *Supra* note 3.

<sup>6</sup> Art. IV, s. 11, Fla. Const.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. 2023-239, Laws of Fla., pg. 143.

<sup>8</sup> S. 292.05(1), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, *Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs – Our Vision and Mission*, <https://www.floridavets.org/leadership/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> In 2015, the Florida is for Veterans, Inc., Board of Directors approved the fictitious name “Veterans Florida” and rebranded as such. See <http://dos.sunbiz.org/scripts/ficidet.exe?action=DETREG&docnum=G15000027981&rdocnum=G15000027981> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024). See also s. 295.21(5)(e), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> S. 295.21(1), F.S.

veterans for employment opportunities, and promotes the hiring of veterans.<sup>12</sup> In FY 2022-2023, Veterans Florida assisted 2,307 veterans with career assistance and job placement.<sup>13</sup>

Veterans Florida is governed by a nine-member board of directors (Board). The Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint three members to the Board. Members serve four-year staggered terms and each member may be reappointed once to an additional four-year term. Board members are not compensated but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses.<sup>14</sup>

Duties of Veterans Florida include:

- Contracting with at least one entity to research and identify the target market and the educational and employment needs of veterans and their spouses.
- Advising the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation in certain instances.
- Promoting and enhancing the value of military skill sets to businesses.
- Implementing and administering the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.
- Managing all appropriated funds to ensure the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements.
- Serving as the state's principal assistance organization under DoD's SkillBridge program for employers and transitioning service members.<sup>15</sup>

### *Veterans Employment and Training Services Program*

Veterans Florida administers the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program (program) to assist in connecting veterans in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for veterans or their spouses.<sup>17</sup>

Functions of the program include:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses seeking employment and who reside in or who have an interest in relocating to Florida, and assisting such veterans or their spouses.
- Assisting Florida businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and their spouses.
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establishing criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximizing the use of funding for the grant program.<sup>18</sup>
- Contracting with one or more entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in Florida that connects business leaders with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs.<sup>19</sup>

### Veterans Oral History Projects

Several research institutions in the state have active programs that gather oral history from our nation's veterans. The University of Florida organizes the Veterans History Project (VHP) within the university's

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<sup>12</sup> S. 295.21(2), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Veterans Florida, *Annual Report (2023)*, 15, [https://www.veteransflorida.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FIFV-Annual-Report-2023\\_.pdf](https://www.veteransflorida.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FIFV-Annual-Report-2023_.pdf) (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> S. 295.21(4), F.S.

<sup>15</sup> S. 295.21(3), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> S. 295.22, F.S.

<sup>17</sup> S. 295.22(2), F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Costs and expenditures for each veteran trainee is capped at \$8,000. Qualified businesses may receive reimbursement equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a permanently, full-time employed veteran, however, the business must cover the entire cost of the training initially. Eligible costs and expenditures that may be reimbursed include tuition and fees, books and classroom materials, and rental fees for facilities. Grant funds may only be used in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs. S. 295.22(3)(d), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> S. 295.22(3), F.S.

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (SPOHP).<sup>20</sup> The VHP, founded in 2000, is a collection of over 300 oral history interviews with veterans from military conflicts ranging from the Civil War to present day. The VHP came into existence after the Library of Congress approached SPOHP for assistance in collecting oral histories from World War II veterans for the nationwide Veteran's History Project.<sup>21</sup>

The University of Central Florida (UCF) collects and preserves oral histories from Central Florida veterans as a part of its UCF Community Veterans History Project.<sup>22</sup> These histories, which have been collected since the fall of 2010, are available through the UCF library and contribute to the Library of Congress's VHP.

### Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries (Council) is created within the Department of Health (DOH) and administers the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP). BSCIP's purpose is to provide all eligible residents<sup>23</sup> who sustain a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury the opportunity to obtain the necessary services that will enable them to return to an appropriate level of functioning in their community.<sup>24</sup>

The Council is a 16-member body appointed by the state Surgeon General, comprised of:

- Four members who must have a brain injury or are family members of individuals who have a brain injury.
- Four members who must have a spinal cord injury or are family members of individuals who have a spinal cord injury.
- Two members who represent the special needs children who have a brain or spinal cord injury.
- Six members who are physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, or representatives from support groups that have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries.<sup>25</sup>

Members of the Council serve four-year terms and may not serve more than two terms; however, if a vacancy occurs for a member with less than 18 months remaining in his or her term, the member appointed to fill the vacancy may be reappointed twice.<sup>26</sup> The Council meets at least twice annually and provides advice and expertise to DOH in the preparation, implementation, and periodic review of the BSCIP.<sup>27</sup> Members of the Council are not compensated but may be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses.<sup>28</sup>

### Department of State

The Department of State (DOS),<sup>29</sup> is composed of six divisions, including the Division of Arts and Culture (Division).<sup>30</sup> The head of DOS is the Secretary of State (Secretary), who is appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation. The functions of the Secretary including performing the

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<sup>20</sup> The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program is an oral history program within the University of Florida whose mission is to gather, preserve, and promote living histories of individuals from all walks of life. Univ. of Fla., Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, *Our Mission*, <https://oral.history.ufl.edu/welcome/mission/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Univ. of Fla., Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, *Veterans History Project*, <https://oral.history.ufl.edu/projects/vhp/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

<sup>22</sup> Univ of Central Fla, *UCF Community Veterans History Project*, <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/veteranshistoryproject/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

<sup>23</sup> All hospitals, attending physicians, public, private, or social agencies must refer all new traumatic moderate-to-severe brain or spinal cord injuries to DOH's Central Registry. S. 381.74, F.S. Caseworkers within the Central Registry work with affected individuals and their families and determine which individuals meet the eligibility criteria and require services and supports to sustain their health and safety. Fla. Dept. of Health, *Central Registry*, <https://www.floridahealth.gov/provider-and-partner-resources/brain-and-spinal-cord-injury-program/applicants/central-registry.html> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>24</sup> Fla. Dept. of Health, *Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program*, <https://www.floridahealth.gov/provider-and-partner-resources/brain-and-spinal-cord-injury-program/index.html> (last visited Jan. 26, 2024).

<sup>25</sup> S. 381.78(1), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> S. 381.78(2), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> S. 381.78(3)-(4), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> S. 381.78(5), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> S. 20.10, F.S.

<sup>30</sup> S. 20.10(2), F.S.

duties of the custodian of state records set in the Florida Constitution<sup>31</sup> The Secretary also serves as the state protocol officer and, in consultation with the Governor and other governmental officials, develops, maintains, publishes, and distributes the state protocol manual.<sup>32</sup>

### *Division of Arts and Culture*

The Division is the state's arts agency and it promotes access to cultural opportunities through various programs and grants. The Division provides funding, programs, and resources for arts in education, local arts agencies, state service organizations, museums, theater, dance folk art, literature, media arts, multidisciplinary projects, music, and visual arts programs and projects.<sup>33</sup>

The Division is also responsible for operating the Florida Folklife Program (Folklife Program).<sup>34</sup> Established in 1979, the Folklife Program documents, presents, and preserves Florida's vibrant folklife and traditional culture.<sup>35</sup> This task is accomplished by identifying, researching, interpreting, and presenting folk arts, performers, folklore, traditions, customs, and cultural heritages.<sup>36</sup> The Division is responsible for publishing written materials to disseminate information about the folk cultural resources of the state. The Division may enter into contracts and agreements with other entities to carry out its duties and to accept donations.<sup>37</sup>

The Division employs a state folklorist to organize activities of the Folklife Program.<sup>38</sup> The state folklorist is advised by the Florida Folklife Council, a seven-member body appointed by the Secretary.<sup>39</sup> The council is responsible for helping to stimulate public interest in folklife, recommending potential projects, and assisting in developing proposals and grant applications.<sup>40</sup>

### *Incorporation and Business Filings*

DOS is responsible for receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required by law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,<sup>41</sup> articles of incorporation,<sup>42</sup> and registration of fictitious names.<sup>43</sup> A person who wants to file incorporation and business filings with DOS must pay the appropriate fee. Amongst the filings received and maintained by DOS, and the appropriate filing fee associated with them, are those identified in:

- Chapter 605, F.S., Florida Revised Limited Liability Company Act: Limited liability companies file with DOS a registration with their name, registered agent, and registered office location.<sup>44</sup>
- Chapter 607, F.S., Florida Business Corporation Act: Corporations file their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>45</sup>
- Chapter 617, F.S., Corporations not for profit: Not for profit corporations file with the DOS their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>46</sup>
- Chapter 620, F.S., Partnership laws: Limited partnerships file a certificate of limited partnership with DOS containing the name of the limited partnership, the address, and the business address

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<sup>31</sup> S. 20.10(1), F.S.

<sup>32</sup> S. 15.01(1), F.S.

<sup>33</sup> Fla. Dept. of State, Division of Arts and Culture, *Mission*, <https://dos.fl.gov/cultural/about-us/mission/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

<sup>34</sup> S. 265.802, F.S.

<sup>35</sup> Fla. Dept. of State, *Florida Folklife Program*, <https://dos.fl.gov/historical/folklife/> (last visited Feb. 14, 2024).

<sup>36</sup> S. 265.802(1), F.S.

<sup>37</sup> S. 265.802(2), F.S.

<sup>38</sup> S. 265.802(4), F.S.

<sup>39</sup> S. 265.803, F.S.

<sup>40</sup> S. 265.803(2), F.S.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.

<sup>42</sup> S. 607.0203, F.S.

<sup>43</sup> S. 865.09, F.S.

<sup>44</sup> S. 605.0112(5), 605.113(4), and 605.113(5), F.S. See s. 605.0206, F.S.

<sup>45</sup> Ss. 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. See 607.0120(9), F.S.

<sup>46</sup> Ss. 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

of each general partner,<sup>47</sup> as well as an annual report, among other documents.<sup>48</sup> General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.<sup>49</sup>

Fees vary depending on the type of filing.

### Hunting and Fishing Licenses

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) establishes forms for and issues hunting and fishing licenses.<sup>50</sup> A person who wants to hunt or fish must possess a Florida hunting, freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license when engaged in such activities.<sup>51</sup> Fees for licenses and permits typically range from \$17 to \$151<sup>52</sup> depending on the type and duration of the license, as well as if the individual is a Florida resident.<sup>53</sup>

Current law exempts certain individuals from the hunting or fishing licensing requirements.<sup>54</sup> For example, any resident who is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and not stationed in Florida, when home on leave for 30 days or less, is exempt from the licensing requirements.<sup>55</sup> In addition, an exemption on a hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license and permit fee is available to a resident who is certified or determined to be:

- Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of workers' compensation as verified by an order of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the carrier providing workers' compensation benefits, or to be totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board, by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued by the FDVA, upon proof of the same. A license issued on a no fee basis expires after five years and must be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.<sup>56</sup>
- Disabled as verified by the U.S. Social Security Administration. A license issued on a no fee basis expires after two years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every two years thereafter.<sup>57</sup>

### Required Instruction in Florida Schools

Current law requires each district school board to provide all courses required for middle grades promotion, high school graduation, and appropriate instruction designed to ensure that students meet State Board of Education adopted standards in reading and other language arts, mathematics, science social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the following specific topics must be taught:

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence, including national sovereignty, natural law, self-evident truth, equality of all persons, limited government, popular sovereignty,

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<sup>47</sup> Ss. 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

<sup>48</sup> S. 620.1210, F.S.

<sup>49</sup> Ss. 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

<sup>50</sup> S. 379.352(2) and (3), F.S.

<sup>51</sup> This includes individuals who are aiding in the take. FWC, *Exemptions*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/do-i-need-one/> (last visited Jan. 23, 2024).

<sup>52</sup> Outside of this range, FWC offers a five-year resident gold sportsman's license that includes freshwater fishing, hunting, and saltwater fishing licenses and wildlife management area, archery, muzzleloading gun, crossbow, deer, turkey, Florida waterfowl, snook, and lobster permits for \$494.

<sup>53</sup> See, FWC, *Recreational Freshwater Licenses & Permits*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/freshwater-fishing/> (last visited January 8, 2024); FWC, *Recreational Saltwater Licenses & Permits*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/saltwater-fishing/> (last visited January 8, 2024); FWC, *Recreational Hunting Licenses & Permits*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/hunting/> (last visited January 8, 2024).

<sup>54</sup> See s. 379.353, F.S., for a list of individuals who are exempt from permitting requirements. See also, FWC, *Exemptions*, <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/do-i-need-one/> (last visited January 8, 2024).

<sup>55</sup> S. 379.353(2)(c), F.S.

<sup>56</sup> S. 379.353(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>57</sup> S. 379.353(1)(b), F.S.

<sup>58</sup> S. 1003.42(1)(a), F.S.

and inalienable rights of life, liberty, and property, and how they form the philosophical foundation of our government.

- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the U.S. Constitution, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights and how the Constitution provides the structure of our government.
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the Federalist Papers.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government, including the primary functions of and interrelationships between the federal government, the state, and its local entities.
- U.S. history, including the period of discovery, early colonies, the War for Independence, the Civil War, the expansion of the U.S. to its present boundaries, the world wars, and the civil rights movement to the present.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the history and contributions of Americans of the African diaspora to society.
- The history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the history of Japanese internment camps and the incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II; the immigration, citizenship, civil rights, identity, and culture of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to American society.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the U.S.
- The study of women's contributions to the U.S.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide, with instruction occurring on or before Medal of Honor Day, Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day. Instructional staff is encouraged to use the assistance of local veterans and Medal of Honor recipients.<sup>59</sup>

Instructional personnel must teach the topics specified in law efficiently and faithfully, using books and materials meeting the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction.<sup>60</sup>

## **Effect of Proposed Changes**

### Florida Veterans History Program

The bill creates the Florida Veterans' History Program within the Division as a Folklife Program to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and military contributions throughout the nation's history.<sup>61</sup> The bill authorizes the Division to request assistance with the program from FDVA.

The bill requires the Division's folklorists to seek out and identify veterans who are willing to share their experiences in order to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida's veterans and military contributions. The bill authorizes the Division to contract with a third-party vendor to fulfil these responsibilities and to adopt rules to implement the program.

### Veterans Florida

The bill provides that Veterans Florida serves as the state's initial point of military transition assistance for veterans and their spouses. The bill provides that Veterans Florida is created to connect veterans or their spouses with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and resources and that the

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<sup>59</sup> S. 1003.42(2)(a)-(u), F.S.

<sup>60</sup> S. 1003.42(2), F.S.

<sup>61</sup> The term "veteran" means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions only or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions, notwithstanding any action by the VA on individuals discharged or released with other than honorable discharges. S. 1.01(14), F.S.

purpose of Veterans Florida is to inspire the growth and development of veteran-owned small businesses.

The bill requires Veterans Florida to conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses within the target market and requires marketing to include information related to how a veteran's military experience can be valuable to a target industry<sup>62</sup> or secondary industry business.<sup>63</sup> The bill defines "target market" means those members, and their spouses, of the U.S. Armed Forces with 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves.

The bill removes the requirement that Veterans Florida contract with at least one entity to research and identify its target market and the educational and employment needs of veterans and their spouses.

The bill provides that the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives may each appoint only one member from the body over which he or she presides.

#### Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The bill revises the duties of program to focus on efforts within their target market and to assist those veterans and spouses with finding employment in target industry businesses or secondary industry businesses. The bill modifies the grant program that provides funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs by providing that the grant program may prioritize funding certificate, license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials list,<sup>64</sup> federally created certifications or licenses, and any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by Veterans Florida. The bill provides that the list of training expenses for which a qualified business may be reimbursed includes, but is not limited to, the items enumerated in statute, but maintains an \$8,000 maximum cost per veteran trainee.

The bill also provides that grant funds may be used to provide grants to non-active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces for educational stipends while training at any location of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences within the state. Veterans Florida and the University of Florida must enter into a grant agreement before any funds are used. Veterans Florida must determine the amount of the stipend, and training for any individual may not be less than four months and not more than six months in duration.

The bill encourages Veterans Florida to collaborate with state agencies and other entities in order to provide information on a website that links to state agencies and other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources available to veterans and their spouses. The bill provides a non-exhaustive list of entities and programs that Veterans Florida is encouraged to collaborate with and promote.

#### Department of State – Filing Fees

The bill provides that DOS may not charge veterans residing in Florida the applicable fees for filing articles of organization or incorporation, a certificate of limited partnership, or a partnership registration statement, or for the designation of a registered agent as required by general law.

#### Hunting and Fishing Licenses

The bill requires FWC to issue without a fee hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses and permits to a Florida resident who is an honorably discharged disabled veteran separated from service and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the U.S. Armed

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<sup>62</sup> The bill defines "target industrybusiness" to mean a business as defined in s. 288.005, F.S.

<sup>63</sup> The bill defines "secondaryindustrybusiness" to mean a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have directly transferrable skills. These businesses are in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.

<sup>64</sup> See s. 445.04(4)(h), F.S.

Forces as having a 50 percent or greater service-connected disability. Any such license issued expires after five years and must be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.

### Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The bill revises the membership of the Council in the following manner:

- Eight members appointed from the following groups, with one member from each group appointed by the President of the Senate and one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives:
  - Two individuals who have a brain injury or are family members of individuals who have a brain injury.
  - Two individuals who have a spinal cord injury or are family members of individuals who have a spinal cord injury.
  - Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries.
  - Two individuals who have, or who are family members of individuals who have or had, a traumatic injury, chronic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports.
  - Two veterans who have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans.
- Six members appointed by the state Surgeon General who are physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, and representatives from support groups that have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries.

The bill provides that members serve staggered four-year terms of office, requires the Council to meet on a quarterly basis, and provides that Council meetings may only adjourn via unanimous consent.

### Required Instruction

The bill requires instruction on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day, which must include two 45-minute lessons that occur on or before the respective holidays.

#### B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Creates s. 265.8021, F.S., creating the Florida Veterans' History Program.

Section 2: Amends s. 295.21, F.S., relating to Veterans Florida.

Section 3: Amends s. 295.22, F.S., relating to Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.

Section 4: Creates s. 295.25, F.S., providing an exemption for certain filing fees.

Section 5: Amends s. 379.353, F.S., providing an exemption for certain recreational licenses and permits.

Section 6: Amends s. 381.78, F.S., relating to the Council.

Section 7: Amends s. 1003.42, F.S., relating to required instruction.

Section 8: Amends s. 288.0001, F.S., relating to economic development programs evaluation.

Section 9: Reenacting s. 379.3581, F.S., relating to hunter safety courses.

Section 10: Reenacting s. 379.401, F.S., relating to FWC penalties and violations.

Section 11: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2024.

## II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

### A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

#### 1. Revenues:

FWC and DOS will lose some revenue typically generated from fees due to the exemptions provided for by the bill. The anticipated impact is indeterminant but likely insignificant and can be absorbed within existing resources.

#### 2. Expenditures:

According to DOS, expenditures of \$91,207 will be necessary to implement the Florida Veterans' History Program. Expenses incurred by DOS include salary and benefits for an analyst, additional necessary equipment, and travel expenses.<sup>65</sup>

Veterans Florida may have to expend additional funds in order to implement the expansion of duties provided for by the bill. Additional educational support may be needed in order to carry out the required educational instructions provided for by the bill.

The Legislature provides annual funding for Veterans Florida each year in the General Appropriations Act (GAA). The House proposed GAA for FY 2024-2025 includes \$2 million in nonrecurring funds for Veterans Florida.

### B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

#### 1. Revenues:

None.

#### 2. Expenditures:

See FISCAL COMMENTS.

### C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The FWC and DOS waivers provided for by the bill will have a positive impact on individuals who qualify for such waivers.

### D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

Public schools may experience an indeterminant, likely insignificant fiscal impact with curriculum to teach the required two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

## III. COMMENTS

### A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

#### 1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This bill does not appear to affect county or municipal governments.

#### 2. Other:

None.

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<sup>65</sup> Fla. Dept. of State, *2024 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis, Department of State, SB 408*, Jan. 19, 2024 (on file with the State Affairs Committee).

**B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:**

The bill authorizes the Division within DOS to adopt rules to implement the Florida Veterans' History Program.

**C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:**

None.

**IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES**

On January 31, 2024, the Local Administration, Federal Affairs & Special Districts Subcommittee adopted an amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Revised definitions provided by the bill.
- Required all hunting and fishing licenses issued under the exemption provided by the bill to expire after five years of issuance and to be reissued, upon request, every five years thereafter.
- Revised the appointment structure of the Council.

On February 14, 2024, the State Affairs Committee adopted an amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment established the Florida Veterans' History Program, authorized the Division to request assistance with the program from FDVA, and required the Division to seek out and identify veterans who are willing to share their experiences.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the State Affairs Committee.