

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: CS/SB 1666

INTRODUCER: Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security and Senator Collins

SUBJECT: Veterans

DATE: January 29, 2024 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	Proctor	MS	Fav/CS
2.			AHS	
3.			FP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1666 contains multiple provisions on veterans. The bill:

- Expands job outreach, marketing and support services of Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (FIFV);
- Limits the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to only one appointment from the body for which they preside, for the three members they may each appoint to the governing board of directors of FIFV;
- Clarifies that the focus of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is to link veterans and their spouses with businesses in a target or secondary industry business;
- Allows an educational stipend for veterans while training at any location of the University of Florida’s (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) within the state;
- Expands the role of FIFV in assisting with industry certification;
- Provides that a participating business in a FIFV grant program may also receive a grant under any state program, and not just the Quick Response Training Program;
- Exempts veterans from certain business filing fees with the Department of State (DOS);
- Creates a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses for honorably discharged veterans with a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or more;
- Revises the structure, appointment of members, and frequency of meetings of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries; and
- Adds to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans’ Day and Memorial Day.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact. See Section V.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

II. Present Situation:

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

The purpose of FIFV is to promote the state as veteran-friendly by assisting veterans and their spouses with connections to businesses and employment.¹ Duties of the FIFV are to:

- Contract with a research entity experienced in performing market research on the veteran demographic to identify the target market and their educational and employment needs;
- Advise the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on the target market; a marketing campaign designed to keep the target market in the state; and methods to disseminate information to the target market on interests and needs of veterans and their families;
- Promote and enhance the value of military skill sets to businesses;
- Implement the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program;
- Responsibly and prudently manage all funds received and ensure that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements;
- Administer relevant programs; and
- Serve as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for employers and transitioning servicemembers.²

FIFV is governed by a nine-member board of directors.³ The Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint three members to the board, in consideration of military experience and business expertise. Members of the board of directors serve for staggered terms of 4 years. Board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred while serving.⁴

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The Florida Department of Veteran Affairs (FDVA) established the Veterans Employment and Training Services program to link veterans and their spouses with businesses for employment.⁵ 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.⁶ The program is administered by FIFV, whose duties include:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts directed at veterans or their spouses who live in the state or are interested in relocating and are seeking employment;
- Offering skills assessments to veterans or their spouses to establish employment goals and apply for and achieve gainful employment;

¹ Section 295.21(1), F.S.

² Section 295.21(3), F.S.

³ Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Section 295.22(2), F.S.

⁶ *Id.*

- Assisting Florida businesses in recruiting and hiring veterans and veterans' spouses, including providing information about state and federal benefits of hiring veterans;
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of businesses;
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for veterans in this state which connects business leaders in the state with veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs;
- Performing its functions as the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge program for qualified businesses in this state and transitioning servicemembers;
- Assisting veterans and their spouses in accessing training, education, and employment in health care professions; and
- Coordinating with the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health (DOH) to assist veterans and their spouses in obtaining licensure.

Department of State and Incorporation

The DOS is responsible for receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required in law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,⁷ articles of incorporation,⁸ and registration of fictitious names.⁹ A person who wants to file incorporation and business filings with the DOS must pay the appropriate fee. Amongst the filings received and maintained by the DOS, and the appropriate filing fee associated with them, are those identified in:

- Chapter 605, Florida revised limited liability company act: limited liability companies file with the DOS a registration with their name, registered agent, and registered office location;¹⁰
- Chapter 607, Florida business corporation act: corporations file their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;¹¹
- Chapter 617, Corporations not for profit: requires not for profit corporations to file with the DOS their articles of incorporation, changes to their registered office or registered agent, and must file an annual report, among other documents;¹² and
- Chapter 620, Partnership laws: limited partnerships must file a certificate of limited partnership with the DOS containing the name of the limited partnership, the address, and the business address of each general partner¹³ as well as an annual report, among other documents.¹⁴ General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.¹⁵

⁷ See, e.g., ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.

⁸ Sections 607.0203, F.S.

⁹ Section 865.09, F.S.

¹⁰ Sections 605.0112(5), 605.113(4), and 605.113(5), F.S. See s. 605.0206, F.S.

¹¹ Sections 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. See 607.0120(9), F.S.

¹² Sections 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

¹³ Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 620.1210, F.S.

¹⁵ Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

Fees vary and a sampling is provided below.

Department of State Filing Fees		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

Hunting and Fishing Licenses

A person who wants to recreationally hunt or fish in Florida must obtain a recreational license, permit, or authorization number and pay the appropriate fee.¹⁶

Section 379.353(2), F.S., exempts specified individuals from having to possess a recreational license while hunting or fishing. A few examples include any person hunting or freshwater fishing on her or his homestead property, or on the homestead property of the person’s spouse or minor child; any minor child hunting or freshwater fishing on the homestead property of her or his parent; and any resident who is a member of the United States Armed Forces and not stationed in this state, when home on leave for 30 days or less, upon submission of orders.

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 under chapter 440 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 United States Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued by the FDVA, upon proof of the same.¹⁷ A license issued on a no fee basis expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.¹⁸
- Disabled as verified by the United States Social Security Administration. A license issued on a no fee basis expires after 2 years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every 2 years thereafter.¹⁹

¹⁶ Section 379.354, F.S.

¹⁷ Section 379.353(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 379.353(1), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 379.353(1)(b), F.S.

Current fees on these licenses for Florida residents are provided below.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, created within the DOH, is a 16-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council is required to meet twice a year²⁰ and is composed of a minimum of:

- four individuals with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals with brain injuries;
- four individuals with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals with spinal cord injuries; and
- two individuals who represent the special needs of children with brain or spinal cord injuries.²¹

The remaining balance of council members must be physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, and representatives from support groups that have expertise in the rehabilitation of individuals with brain or spinal cord injuries.²²

Council members are appointed by the State Surgeon General. All members serve for a 4-year term and can only serve two terms. The council must meet at least twice annually.²³

The purpose of the council is to provide advice and expertise to the DOH in the preparation, implementation, and periodic review of the brain and spinal cord injury program.²⁴

Members of the advisory council serve unpaid but are entitled to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses for required attendance at council meetings.²⁵

Special Instruction for Middle and High Grades Public School Students

Instructional staff of public schools are required to provide instruction on:

- 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, 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.

²⁰ Section 381.78(1), F.S.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ Sections 381.78(2) and (3), F.S.

²⁴ Section 381.78(4), F.S.

²⁵ Section 381.78(5), F.S.

- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the most important of 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 United States 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 United States.
- The study of women's contributions to the United States.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide. Limits instruction to 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.²⁶

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1666 revises multiple provisions on veterans to expand benefits, revise the structure of the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries, and provide instruction to public K-12 students on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

CS/SB 1666 amends s. 295.21, F.S., to:

- Specify that the purpose of FIFV is to serve as the state's initial point of military transition assistance;
- Expand the duties of FIFV to require marketing, awareness, and outreach activities directed towards the target market, defined as members and 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; and
- Limit the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to only one appointment from the body for which they preside, for the three members they may each appoint to the governing board of directors of FIFV.

²⁶ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

The bill amends s. 295.22, F.S., to:

- Include in the purpose of the program to connect veterans and spouses with opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, training, and resources; to inspire veteran-owned small business; and to assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting veterans and spouses.
- Define as a secondary industry business a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have skills that are directly transferrable. Identifies these businesses as those in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.
- Define as a veteran either a person who, irrespective of discharge status, served in the active military, naval, or air service or a servicemember, a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty, the Florida National Guard, or the U.S. Reserve Forces.
- Clarify that a spouse is a person who is married to a veteran or an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran.
- Define a target industry business as a corporate headquarters business or any business with the features of future growth, stability, high wage, market and resource dependent, industrial base diversification, and positive economic impact and strengthening.
- Define as a target market 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.
- Tailor required marketing and recruiting efforts to direct them at veterans and their spouses within the target market, to include information related to how a veteran's military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business.
- Replace the role of FIFV assisting with information on industry certification with that of prioritizing a certificate, license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List, as is established by the state board, which is the board of directors of CareerSource Florida, Inc.; a federally created certification or license; and a skills-based certification or license as deemed relevant by FIFV.
- Authorize a participating business to receive a grant from any state program rather than identifying as the sole grant program the Quick Response Training Program.
- Authorize FIFV to use a portion of grant funds, as determined by FIFV, for veterans who are not active members of the U.S. Armed Forces for educational stipends while in training at a UF IFAS location within Florida, if the training is between 4 and 6 months in duration. The bill requires FIFV to enter into a grant agreement before funds may be expended.
- Redesignate the SkillBridge program as the SkillBridge initiative; incorporate references to target and secondary industries; and replace references to transitioning servicemembers with eligible veterans;
- Authorize FIFV to assist state agencies and other public entities with recruiting veterans and spouses;
- Encourage FIFV to collaborate with state agencies and other public entities to maximize access to and provide information on one website that, if possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact information, if available, for state agencies and other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

- Provide that outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals between agencies, entities, and FIFV on programs and initiatives that may be conducted include, but are not limited to, the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and the:
 - FDVA through access to benefits and assistance programs and the Hope Navigators Program.
 - Department of Commerce, through the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and Local Veteran Employment Representatives; CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services; the Quick-Response Training Program; and Select Florida.
 - Department of Business and Professional Regulation, through reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.
 - Department of Education, through CAPE industry certifications and information related to earning postsecondary credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military.
 - DOH, through the Office of Veteran Licensure Services and the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.
- Further authorizes the FIFV to coordinate and collaborate with the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help, the State University System, the Florida College System, the Florida Defense Support Task Force, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, and the Florida Talent Development Council.

Exemption on Filing Fees for Incorporation

The bill creates s. 295.25, F.S., to exempt veterans who are state residents from having to pay fees collected by the DOS for the specific filings of:

- Articles of organization;
- Articles of incorporation;
- A certificate of limited partnership;
- A partnership registration statement; or
- A designation of a registered agent.

Fees charged for filings, now exempted, are listed below.

Department of State Filing Fees		
Filing articles of organization or articles of revocation of dissolution.	s. 605.0213(2), F.S.	\$ 100.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 605.0213(7), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 607.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 607.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Articles of incorporation.	s. 617.0122(1), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Designation of and acceptance by registered agent.	s. 617.0122(5), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing an original certificate of limited partnership.	s. 620.1109(2), F.S.	\$ 965.00
Filing a certificate designating a registered agent.	s. 620.1109(8)(a), F.S.	\$ 35.00
Filing a partnership registration statement.	s. 620.81055(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 50.00

Expansion of No Cost Fee for Recreational License

The bill amends s. 379.353(1), F.S., to create a fee exemption on hunting and fishing licenses and permits for a disabled veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who was honorably discharged from service and who is certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater.

The veteran must provide proof of disability.

Fees charged for licenses, now exempted, are listed below.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission License and Permit Fees		
Annual Freshwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Saltwater Fishing License	s. 379.354(4)(b), F.S.	\$ 15.50
Annual Hunting License to Take Game	s. 379.354(4)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.50

The no-cost license expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

Revision of Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries

The bill amends s. 381.78, F.S., to revise the Advisory Council on Brain and Spinal Cord Injuries structure to require:

- Two, rather than four persons with brain injuries or who are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two, rather than four persons with spinal cord injuries or who are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two persons who have, or who are family members of persons who have or had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to sports, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- Two veterans who served in the active military, naval, or air service; are honorably discharged or upgraded to an honorable discharge; and have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or family members of such veterans, appointed as 1 each by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- Six persons who are physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, or representatives from support groups who have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries, and requires appointment by the State Surgeon General.

The bill provides for staggered terms.

The frequency of meetings by the council is increased from at least twice annually to at least quarterly, with meeting adjournment to be by unanimous consent.

Instruction on Veterans' Day and Memorial Day

The bill amends s. 1003.42(2), F.S., to add to the list of required instruction for middle and high school students in public schools two 45-minute lessons on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day. These lessons must take place on or before the holiday.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

A veteran who submits a business filing to the DOS will not have to pay a filing fee for certain filings.

A veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled, and applies for a hunting, fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit, will receive the license or permit without the payment of a state fee.

A veteran who is in training at a UF IFAS location within Florida may be eligible for an educational stipend from FIFV.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may result in an indeterminate negative fiscal impact due to the:

- Expansion of the duties of FIFV and the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program within the FDVA;
- Exemption of certain filing fees for veterans related to business incorporations and associated filings, which currently range from \$25 to \$965 per filing;
- Exemption of state fees on hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses, which each currently cost \$15.50, for a veteran who is certified at 50 percent disabled; and
- Additional required instruction for middle and high school students at public schools.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 295.21, 295.22, 379.353, 381.78, 288.0001, and 1003.42.

This bill creates section 295.25, Florida Statutes.

This bill reenacts the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 379.3581 and 379.401.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on January 29, 2024:

The CS:

- For the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program, the definition of a servicemember is added and defined as a person serving as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and U.S. Reserve Forces; a spouse is redefined to include an unremarried surviving spouse of a veteran; and a veteran is defined as, irrespective of discharge status, a person who otherwise meets the definition of veteran in s. 1.01(14), F.S., or who is a servicemember.
- For a 50 percent or greater service-connected disabled veteran who is eligible for a no-cost hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing license, the license expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

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- For the advisory council on brain and spinal injuries, for each of the appointments that the Speaker of the House provides, the President of the Senate will have one appointment, so that each will have 1 appointment for each type of appointment, for a total of 5 appointments each.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
