

By the Committee on Commerce and Tourism; and Senator Jones

577-02482-25

20251172c1

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to preferences for veterans and
3 military spouses; amending s. 295.07, F.S.; requiring
4 the state and its political subdivisions to give
5 preference in appointment and retention in positions
6 of employment to the spouses of wartime veterans,
7 veterans, members of any reserve component of the
8 United States Armed Forces or the Florida National
9 Guard, and certain active duty servicemembers;
10 amending s. 295.187, F.S.; defining the term "veteran-
11 owned or military spouse-owned business"; providing
12 for contracting preferences for such businesses;
13 amending s. 295.188, F.S.; authorizing private
14 employers to adopt employment policies that give
15 preference in hiring to current members of any reserve
16 component of the United States Armed Forces or the
17 Florida National Guard and their spouses and the
18 spouses of active duty servicemembers serving in the
19 United States Armed Forces; prohibiting members on
20 active duty training from being eligible for such
21 preference; creating s. 295.189, F.S.; providing a
22 short title; providing definitions; requiring the
23 Department of State to waive specified fees for
24 certain businesses; providing eligibility requirements
25 for the fee waivers; providing applicability;
26 providing specified tax exemptions for certain
27 businesses; requiring the Department of Revenue to
28 develop procedures for such exemptions; providing that
29 such exemptions apply for a specified period for

577-02482-25

20251172c1

30 certain businesses relocating to this state;
31 establishing the Veteran and Military Spouse
32 Entrepreneurship Program in consultation with the
33 Department of Commerce; providing requirements for the
34 program; requiring that certain businesses receive
35 expedited processing for certain certifications;
36 providing for rulemaking and interagency cooperation;
37 providing reporting requirements; providing an
38 effective date.

39
40 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

41
42 Section 1. Paragraphs (c), (f), and (g) of subsection (1)
43 of section 295.07, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph
44 (h) is added to that subsection, to read:

45 295.07 Preference in appointment and retention.—

46 (1) The state and its political subdivisions shall give
47 preference in appointment and retention in positions of
48 employment to:

49 (c) A wartime veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14), who has
50 served at least 1 day during a wartime period, and his or her
51 spouse. Active duty for training may not be allowed for
52 eligibility under this paragraph.

53 (f) A veteran as defined in s. 1.01(14) and his or her
54 spouse. Active duty for training may not be allowed for
55 eligibility under this paragraph.

56 (g) A current member of any reserve component of the United
57 States Armed Forces or the Florida National Guard and his or her
58 spouse.

577-02482-25

20251172c1

59 (h) The spouse of an active duty servicemember serving in
60 the United States Armed Forces. Active duty training may not be
61 allowed for eligibility under this paragraph.

62 Section 2. Present paragraph (d) of subsection (3) of
63 section 295.187, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as paragraph
64 (e), a new paragraph (d) is added to that subsection, and
65 subsection (4) of that section is amended, to read:

66 295.187 Florida Veteran Business Enterprise Opportunity
67 Act.—

68 (3) DEFINITIONS.—For the purpose of this section, the term:

69 (d) “Veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business” has
70 the same meaning as in s. 295.189(3).

71 (4) VENDOR PREFERENCE.—

72 (a) A state agency, when considering two or more bids,
73 proposals, or replies for the procurement of commodities or
74 contractual services, at least one of which is from a certified
75 veteran business enterprise or veteran-owned or military spouse-
76 owned business, which are equal with respect to all relevant
77 considerations, including price, quality, and service, shall
78 award such procurement or contract to the certified veteran
79 business enterprise or the veteran-owned or military spouse-
80 owned business.

81 (b) Notwithstanding s. 287.057(12), if a veteran business
82 enterprise or a veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business
83 entitled to the vendor preference under this section and one or
84 more businesses entitled to this preference or another vendor
85 preference provided by law submit bids, proposals, or replies
86 for procurement of commodities or contractual services which are
87 equal with respect to all relevant considerations, including

577-02482-25

20251172c1

88 price, quality, and service, the state agency shall award the
89 procurement or contract to the business having the smallest net
90 worth.

91 (c) Political subdivisions of the state are encouraged to
92 offer a similar consideration to businesses certified under this
93 section.

94 Section 3. Section 295.188, Florida Statutes, is amended to
95 read:

96 295.188 Preference in hiring veterans and their spouses for
97 private employers.—

98 (1) The Legislature intends to establish a permissive
99 preference in private employment for certain veterans and their
100 spouses.

101 (2) A private employer may adopt an employment policy that
102 gives preference in hiring to an honorably discharged veteran,
103 as defined in s. 1.01(14); the spouse of a veteran with a
104 service-connected disability, as described in s. 295.07(1)(b);
105 the unremarried widow or widower of a veteran who died of a
106 service-connected disability, as described in s. 295.07(1)(d);
107 ~~or~~ the unremarried widow or widower of a member of the United
108 States Armed Forces who died in the line of duty under combat-
109 related conditions; a current member of any reserve component of
110 the United States Armed Forces or the Florida National Guard or
111 his or her spouse; or the spouse of an active duty servicemember
112 serving in the United States Armed Forces. Active duty training
113 may not be allowed for eligibility under this subsection. Such
114 policy shall be applied uniformly to employment decisions
115 regarding hiring and promotion.

116 (3) These preferences are not considered violations of any

577-02482-25

20251172c1

117 state or local equal employment opportunity law.

118 Section 4. Section 295.189, Florida Statutes, is created to
119 read:

120 295.189 Business development incentives for veterans and
121 military spouses.—

122 (1) SHORT TITLE.—This act may be cited as the “Florida
123 Veterans and Military Spouse Business Development Act.”

124 (2) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

125 (a) The Legislature finds that veterans and military
126 spouses contribute significantly to this state’s economy through
127 their skills, expertise, and entrepreneurial efforts.

128 (b) The Legislature recognizes the challenges of frequent
129 relocations and economic instability faced by many military
130 spouses.

131 (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that this act
132 attract and support veteran-owned and military spouse-owned
133 businesses by providing financial and operational incentives.

134 (3) DEFINITIONS.—For the purpose of this section, the term:

135 (a) “Military spouse” means the spouse of:

136 1. An active duty member of the United States Armed Forces;

137 or

138 2. A veteran.

139 (b) “Veteran” has the same meaning as in s. 1.01(14).

140 (c) “Veteran-owned or military spouse-owned business” means
141 a business entity that is at least 51 percent owned, controlled,
142 or managed by one or more veterans or military spouses.

143 (4) FEE WAIVER.—

144 (a) The Department of State shall waive all fees for:

145 1. A new business established by a veteran or military

577-02482-25

20251172c1

146 spouse.

147 2. An existing veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
148 business that relocates to this state.

149 (b) The Department of State shall establish registration
150 requirements for such fee waivers, which must include:

151 1. For veterans, a DD Form 214 or another acceptable form
152 of identification as specified by the Department of Veterans'
153 Affairs; or

154 2. For military spouses, verification of a military spouse
155 relationship with a spouse who is on active duty.

156 (c) The fee waivers apply to veteran-owned or military
157 spouse-owned businesses established or certified between July 1,
158 2025, and December 31, 2030.

159 (5) TAX EXEMPTIONS.—

160 (a) Eligible veteran-owned and military spouse-owned
161 businesses shall receive:

162 1. A 5-year exemption from the state corporate income tax
163 and state franchise tax.

164 2. A one-time sales tax exemption on equipment and supplies
165 directly related to its business operations.

166 (b) The Department of Revenue shall establish procedures
167 for claiming these exemptions.

168 (c) For businesses relocating to this state, tax exemptions
169 apply for 5 years after the date of certification.

170 (6) VETERAN AND MILITARY SPOUSE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM.—

171 (a) The Department of Veterans' Affairs, in conjunction
172 with the Department of Commerce, shall establish the Veteran and
173 Military Spouse Entrepreneurship Program, including an
174 application process and eligibility criteria. The program must

577-02482-25

20251172c1

175 include:

176 1. Personalized business mentorship and consulting
177 services.

178 2. Assistance with obtaining startup capital through state
179 and federal funding programs.

180 3. Educational resources, including workshops on business
181 planning, marketing, and regulatory compliance.

182 (b) Priority must be given to applications from businesses
183 that are veteran-owned or military spouse-owned.

184 (7) EXPEDITED PROCESSING.—Veteran-owned and military
185 spouse-owned businesses must receive expedited processing for
186 certifications.

187 (8) ADMINISTRATION.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs,
188 the Department of Revenue, and the Department of State shall:

189 (a) Develop rules for administering this section.

190 (b) Ensure interagency cooperation for seamless
191 implementation of this section.

192 (9) ANNUAL REPORTING.—The Department of Veterans' Affairs
193 shall submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of
194 the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives that
195 includes:

196 (a) The number of veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
197 businesses that were established in this state or that relocated
198 to this state.

199 (b) Economic metrics such as jobs created by and tax
200 revenue impact of veteran-owned or military spouse-owned
201 businesses.

202 (c) Demographic data for the participating veterans and
203 military spouses.

577-02482-25

20251172c1

204

Section 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.