

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 1280

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

SUBJECT: Military Affairs

DATE: March 26, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ingram	Proctor	MS	Fav/CS
2.			AHS	
3.			AP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1280 amends multiple provisions regarding servicemembers and veterans. The bill:

- Redesignates the official state flagship as the S.S. American Victory.
- Revises the board of directors membership of Florida is for Veterans, Inc. (Veterans Florida).
- Renames the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to the Veterans Florida Opportunity (VFO) Program.
- Revises the grant reimbursement limitations under the VFO program and deletes a provision that authorizes for reimbursement of only permanent full-time employees.
- Revises how training costs must be calculated under the VFO program.
- Authorizes grant funds to be used as educational stipends for certain persons training at any location of the University of Florida (UF) Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.
- Requires Veterans Florida and the UF to enter into an agreement for grant funds.
- Provides a one-time exemption to veterans from the Department of State fees for select incorporation and business filings.
- Requires that a free disabled veteran motor vehicle license number plate be issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to certain disabled veterans and deletes the “DV” letter designation requirement of such license plates.
- Authorizes the issuance of a military license plate or a specialty license plate to certain disabled veterans with the initials “DV” embossed in the top left-hand corner and provides certain protections apply with the issuance of such a military or specialty license plate.

- Exempts Florida National Guard members and their spouses from certain driver license and identification card fees.
- Provides that the chief judge of a judicial circuit has the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program of that circuit by removing the state attorney's authority.

The bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, for Veterans Florida, for the administration and implementation of the VFO program.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact. *See* Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

State Emblems

Chapter 15, F.S., designates official state emblems. To date there are designations for a state flag, seal, motto, tree, fruit, beverage, citrus archive, anthem, song, shell, stone, gem, wildflower, play, animal, freshwater fish, saltwater fish, marine mammal, saltwater mammal, butterfly, reptile, saltwater reptile, tortoise, air fair, rodeo, festival, moving image center and archive, litter control symbol, pageant, opera program, renaissance festival, railroad museums, history museum, transportation museum, flagship, soil, fiddle contest, band, sports hall of fame, pie, honey, dessert, horse, and heritage cattle breed.

Schooner Western Union

First launched in 1939, the 130-foot Schooner Western Union is the last surviving tall ship built in Florida.¹ The wood-built schooner was originally used to lay submarine cables² and served the Western Union Telegraph Co. for 35 years, repairing and maintaining the company's telegraph cables throughout the Caribbean.³ Upon its retirement, the schooner provided passenger service on and off for many years, originally participating in "Operation Sail," a gathering of tall ships in New York City celebrating the bicentennial of the United States.⁴ In 1997, the Schooner Western Union returned to Key West with its new owners, the Historic Tours of America, where it was used for passenger service until it was put up for sale due to unsuccessful business.⁵ Eventually

¹ Section 15.0465, F.S. and Key West Historic Seaport, *Schooner Western Union Official Flagship of the State of Florida and the Flagship of the City of Key West*, available at <https://keywesthistoricseaport.com/museums/the-schooner-western-union-state-of-floridas-flagship/> (last visited March 24, 2025).

² Museums Database, *Schooner Western Union Preservation Society, Inc., Key West, FL*, available at <https://museumsdatabase.com/museums/view/6339> (last visited March 24, 2025).

³ The Historical Marker Database, *Western Union Key Wests Flagship Schooner*, available at <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=246073> (last visited March 24, 2025).

⁴ Monroe County Public Library, Florida Keys History Center, Feb. 5, 2024, *Vol. 9 'Ready for Sea' - The Construction and Launching of the Western Union As Reported in the Key West Citizen*, available at <https://www.keyslibraries.org/post/island-chronicles-vol-9> (last visited March 24, 2025).

⁵ *Id.*

the touring company donated the schooner to the Schooner Western Union Preservation Society who wanted to keep the schooner in Key West.⁶ Raising funds and collecting donations, the Preservation Society worked to repair and maintain the schooner which is a part of Key West's maritime history.⁷

In 2012, the Legislature designated the Schooner Western Union as the official state flagship.⁸ The schooner had been open to the public for tours, charters, and educational programs. In more recent years, the Schooner Western Union has fallen into disrepair,⁹ and according to the Key West Historic Seaport, the schooner is currently under restoration and not in Key West.¹⁰

S.S. American Victory

The S.S. American Victory, a 455-foot historic steamship built in 1944, is one of a limited number of operational WWII ships in the United States (U.S.). After serving in WWII, the ship went into dry-dock in New Jersey in February 1946, and it then spent until June 1946 loading military cargo in New York and making port calls in the Caribbean and South America, including Trinidad, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Montevideo, Uruguay, and Buenos Aires, Argentina. For most of 1952, the S.S. American Victory supplied American and United Nations troops during the Korean War from ports in the U.S. and Japan. In March 1953, the S.S. American Victory was charged with returning the bodies of 370 soldiers who died in Korea during the Korean War. Following the Korean War, the S.S. American Victory was assigned to the Sabine River Reserve Fleet near Orange, Texas until the ship was reactivated for the Vietnam War in 1966. The S.S. American Victory operated between the U.S., Europe, and the Far East carrying military supplies to South Vietnam. The ship was deactivated on October 24, 1969, following her service during the Vietnam War.¹¹

In 1985, the S.S. American Victory went through a \$2.5 million restoration and in 1996, the ship was towed from Virginia to downtown Tampa¹² to what has become known as the American Victory Ship and Museum.¹³ The S.S. American Victory is a nonprofit museum and fully-functioning 1940s era steamship available for visitors to experience 7 days a week.¹⁴

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Museums database, *supra* note 2.

⁸ Ch. 2012-158, Laws of Fla. See s. 15.0465, F.S.

⁹ Keys Weekly, Keys History: Historic Schooner Dry Docked on Stock Island Has Seen Better Days, May 3, 2024, available at <https://keysweekly.com/42/keys-history-historic-schooner-dry-docked-on-stock-island-has-seen-better-days/> (last visited March 24, 2025).

¹⁰ Key West Historic Seaport, *Schooner Western Union, Official Flagship of the State of Florida and the Flagship of the City of Key West*, available at <https://keywesthistoricseaport.com/museums/the-schooner-western-union-state-of-floridas-flagship/> (last visited March 24, 2025).

¹¹ American Victory Tampa Bay, *Mission and History*, available at <https://www.americanvictory.org/about/mission-and-history/> (last visited March 24, 2025).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ American Victory Tampa Bay, *Come Aboard and Relive History*, available at <https://www.americanvictory.org/> (last visited March 24, 2025).

¹⁴ American Victory Tampa Bay, *supra* note 11 and *Id.*

State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) is the designated state approving agency for purposes of veteran's education and training in accordance with federal law and the annual contract between the State of Florida and the federal government.¹⁵

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

Florida is for Veterans, Inc., (Veterans Florida) is a nonprofit corporation within the FDVA created to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state.¹⁶ Veterans Florida encourages and assists retired and recently separated military personnel to keep or make Florida their permanent residence.¹⁷ Veterans Florida also assists veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and encourages the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community which lends to its mission in assisting veterans fully transition to civilian life.¹⁸ Veterans Florida has many duties, including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing, awareness, and outreach activities toward its target market.¹⁹
- Promoting and enhancing the value of military skill sets to businesses.
- Implementing and administering the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) program and administering other relevant programs.
- Managing all funds received in a responsible and prudent manner and ensuring that the use of such funds conforms to all applicable laws, bylaws, or contractual requirements.²⁰

Veterans Florida is not a unit or entity of state government; however, it is a separate budget entity and not subject to the control, supervision, or direction of the FDVA.²¹ In Fiscal Year 2024-2025, the Legislature appropriated \$2.4 million in nonrecurring funds for veterans employment and training services.²²

Board of Directors

Veterans Florida is governed by an 11-member board of directors.²³ In consideration of military experience and business expertise among the appointments, the Governor appoints three members to the board and the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives each appoint three members to the board who may not be from the body over which he or she presides.²⁴ In addition, the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of

¹⁵ Ch. 88-29, s. 24, Laws of Fla. See s. 295.124, F.S.

¹⁶ Ch. 2014-1, s. 12, Laws of Fla. See s. 295.21(1) and (2), F.S.

¹⁷ Dep't of Veterans' Affairs, *Florida is for Veterans, Inc., Brands as Veterans Florida*, available at <https://floridavets.org/florida-is-for-veterans-inc-brands-as-veterans-florida/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

¹⁸ Section 295.21(2), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 295.21(3)(a), F.S. defines "target market" to mean servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried.

²⁰ Section 295.21(3), F.S., is the complete statutory list of duties required of Veterans Florida.

²¹ Section 295.21(1), F.S.

²² Ch. 2024-231, Laws of Fla., Specific Appropriations 605 and 606, Section 3, Human Services, General Appropriations Act.

²³ Section 295.21(4)(a), F.S.

²⁴ *Id.*

Representatives each appoint one member from the body over which he or she presides to serve on the board as ex officio, nonvoting members.²⁵ Members of the board of directors serve for staggered terms of 4 years.²⁶ Board members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses incurred while serving.²⁷

Veterans Employment and Training Services Program

Created within the FDVA, the VETS program assists in connecting servicemembers, veterans, or their spouses in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and resources.²⁸ The purpose of the VETS program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields and to inspire the growth of veteran owned small businesses.²⁹ In accordance with its duties under s. 252.21(3), F.S., Veterans Florida administers the VETS program and performs many functions including, but not limited to:

- Conducting marketing and recruiting efforts.
- Assisting individuals in the target market³⁰ who reside in or relocate to Florida and who seek employment with the target industry or secondary target industry business.
- Offering skills assessments and assisting in establishing employment goals.
- Assisting Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target market. Veterans Florida provides services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable applicants for employment. Suitable applicants include veterans or veterans' spouses who have appropriate job skills or may need additional training to meet the specific needs of a business.
- Providing information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.
- Creating a grant program to provide funding to assist individuals in the target market in meeting the workforce-skill needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program.
- Contracting with entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target market in Florida which connects business leaders in the state with such individuals seeking to become entrepreneurs.
- Administering a SkillBridge³¹ initiative for target industry and secondary industry businesses in this state and for eligible individuals in the target market who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state.³²

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Section 295.21(4)(c), F.S.

²⁷ Section 295.21(4)(e), F.S.

²⁸ Section 295.22(3), F.S.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ See U.S. Dep't of Defense, DOD SkillBridge, Program Overview-What is SkillBridge, available at <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/program-overview.htm> (March 23, 2025).

³² Section 295.22(4), F.S.

Under the VETS program, Veterans Florida may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.³³ Veterans Florida may collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives.³⁴ One of the entities that Veterans Florida collaborates with under s. 295.22(5), F.S., is the Department of Commerce and efforts of the now defunct Florida Defense Support Task Force which was replaced by a Department of Commerce direct-support organization in 2024.³⁵

Grant Program

Within a grant program created by Veterans Florida, grant funds may be used only in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs and may fund specialized training specific to a particular business.³⁶

- Grants may be allocated only upon a review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of accreditation and licensure and as such, grant funds may be prioritized to be used for:
 - A certificate, a license, or nondegree training from the Master Credentials List;³⁷
 - Any federally created certifications or licenses; and
 - Any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by Veterans Florida.³⁸
- Costs and expenditures are limited to \$8,000 per trainee. Qualified businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before receiving reimbursement from Veterans Florida equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a permanent, full-time employee. Eligible costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:
 - Tuition and fees.
 - Books and classroom materials.
 - Rental fees for facilities.³⁹
- Before funds are allocated for a request, Veterans Florida must prepare a grant agreement which must include certain identifications and permissions.⁴⁰
- A business may receive a grant fund under any state program and a grant within the VETS program for the same veteran trainee.⁴¹

University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)

The UF/IFAS is a federal-state-county partnership devoted to developing familiarity with agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences.

UF/IFAS satisfies the University of Florida's (UF) land grant mission by working to enhance and sustain the quality of human life through its research facilities, extension services offered in

³³ Section 295.22(5), F.S.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Ch. 2024-234, Laws of Fla.

³⁶ Section 295.22(4)(d), F.S.

³⁷ Section 445.004(4)(h), F.S.

³⁸ Section 295.22(4)(d)1., F.S.

³⁹ Section 295.22(4)(d)2., F.S.

⁴⁰ Section 295.22(4)(d)3., F.S.

⁴¹ Section 295.22(4)(d)4., F.S.

every county throughout the state, and education at the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.⁴²

The Morrill Act of 1862 established the Land Grant university system. On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law what is generally referred to as the Land Grant Act. Sponsored by U.S. Representative Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, the legislation granted to each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative under apportionment based on the 1860 census. Proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in a perpetual endowment fund which would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states.⁴³

The Florida Agricultural College established at Lake City in 1884 under the Morrill Act eventually became the UF's College of Agriculture in 1906. At that time, the East Florida Seminary joined the college and was moved to Gainesville. The renamed University of Florida was the land grant college in Florida, and the Agricultural Experiment Station became a unit of the College of Agriculture at UF. At present, research and education programs are operated by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station at 22 locations throughout Florida.⁴⁴

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service specifying that the service would be associated with a land grant college. The Smith-Lever Act also required that federal funds be matched with local funds. Florida Cooperative Extension is a partnership between UF/IFAS, United States Department of Agriculture, and county governments in Florida to provide scientific knowledge and expertise to the public through nonresident educational programs. Operating as part of UF/IFAS, Florida Cooperative Extension serves the state's 67 counties by providing information and conducting educational programs on issues relating to agriculture, world markets, conservation, food safety, child and family development, consumer credit, and youth development.⁴⁵

Department of State

The Department of State (DOS), created in s. 20.10, F.S., is composed of six divisions: Elections, Historical Resources, Corporations, Library and Information Services, Arts and Culture, and Administration. The head of the DOS is the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Secretary performs functions conferred by the State Constitution upon the custodian of state records.⁴⁶

One of the DOS's responsibilities includes receiving and maintaining incorporation and business filings required in law, such as service of process for legal proceedings,⁴⁷ articles of

⁴² UF/IFAS University of Florida, *About UF/IFAS*, available at <https://ifas.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

⁴³ UF/IFAS University of Florida, *Land Grant & Sea Grant: Acts, History & Institutions*, available at <https://ifas.ufl.edu/land-grant-sea-grant-acts-history/> (last visited March 23, 2025).

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Section 20.10(1), F.S.

⁴⁷ *See, e.g., ss. 48.061, 48.062, and 48.181, F.S.*

incorporation,⁴⁸ and registration of fictitious names.⁴⁹ 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;⁵⁰
- 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;⁵¹
- 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;⁵² 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 partner⁵³ as well as an annual report, among other documents.⁵⁴ General partnerships must file a partnership registration statement and an annual report, among other documents.⁵⁵

Filing fees vary. The following is a sampling of those fees:

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

Disabled Veteran “DV” License Plates

Section 320.084, F.S., provides that a disabled veteran is eligible for one free “DV” license plate if he or she has been a resident of this state for the preceding 5 years or has established a

⁴⁸ Section 607.0203, F.S.

⁴⁹ Section 865.09, F.S.

⁵⁰ Sections 605.0112(5), 605.0113(4), and 605.0113(5), F.S. *See* s. 605.0206, F.S.

⁵¹ Sections 607.0203, 607.0502, and 607.1622, F.S. *See* s. 607.0120(9), F.S.

⁵² Sections 617.0203, 617.0502, and 617.1622, F.S.

⁵³ Sections 620.1109 and 620.1201(1)(a)–(e), F.S.

⁵⁴ Section 620.1210, F.S.

⁵⁵ Sections 620.8105 and 620.9003, F.S.

domicile⁵⁶ in this state, has been honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces, and provides proof that he or she:

- Has a vehicle initially acquired through financial assistance by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or its predecessor specifically for the purchase of an automobile;
- Has been determined by the VA or its predecessor to have a service-related 100 percent disability rating for compensation; or
- Has been determined to have a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent and receives disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Forces.

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) must require each person to whom a motor vehicle license plate has been issued in accordance with s. 320.084(1), F.S., to apply to the DHSMV for reissuance of his or her registration license plate.⁵⁷ The license number on each plate issued to a disabled veteran must be identified by the letter designation “DV.”⁵⁸ The design of the special disabled veteran plate is red, white, and blue, and resembles the United States flag.⁵⁹ As of January 2025, there were 142,529 active Florida “DV” license plates, the most of any military license plate.⁶⁰

Upon issuance of each new permanent “DV” license plate, an initial validation sticker with an expiration not exceeding 27 months, is issued without cost to the applicant.⁶¹ The applicant does have to pay the associated service charges for each initial application or renewal of registration.⁶² Registration must be renewed annually or biennially, and at that time the applicant must submit a certified statement affirming their continued eligibility for the special “DV” license plate.⁶³

Any vehicle displaying a “DV” license plate that is transporting the person to whom the plate was issued is authorized to park in a designated accessible parking space.⁶⁴ A state agency, county, municipality, or any agency thereof, may not exact any fee for parking on the public streets or highways or in any metered parking space from the driver of a vehicle that displays the “DV” license plate when the vehicle is transporting the person who has the disability or who to whom the plate was issued.⁶⁵ Additionally, the governing body of a publicly owned or publicly operated airport must grant free parking to a vehicle displaying a “DV” license plate.⁶⁶ Every full-service gasoline station offering self-service at a lesser cost is required to have an attendant employed by the station to dispense gasoline from the self-service portion of the station to any motor vehicle properly displaying an exemption parking permit including, but not limited to, a

⁵⁶ Section 222.17(1), (2), or (3) F.S., provides the manner in which a person must prove domicile in the State of Florida under s. 320.084, F.S.

⁵⁷ Section 320.084(3), F.S.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ See Dep’t of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), *Florida Military License Plates*, HSMV 80003 (Rev. 1/2025), available at https://www.flhsmv.gov/pdf/specialtyplates/military_brochure.pdf at 2 (last visited March 25, 2025).

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 6.

⁶¹ Section 320.084(4)(a), F.S.

⁶² Section 320.084(4)(b), F.S.

⁶³ Section 320.084(4)(c), F.S.

⁶⁴ Sections 553.5041(1) and 316.1955(1), F.S.

⁶⁵ Section 316.1964(1), F.S. However, a fee may be charged when such parking facility or lot is being used in connection with an event at a convention center, cruise-port terminal, sports stadium, sports arena, coliseum, or auditorium. See s. 316.1964(3), F.S.

⁶⁶ Section 316.1964(7), F.S.

vehicle displaying a “DV” license plate.⁶⁷ These rights are afforded by the state and are not necessarily universally accepted as parking permits and license plates designated with the International Symbol of Accessibility.⁶⁸

In 2024, the Legislature authorized a disabled veteran who qualifies for the “DV” license plate to select a special military license plate for which he or she is eligible or specialty license plate in lieu of the free “DV” license plate.⁶⁹ The applicant must pay all of the applicable fees related to such a plate. In addition, an applicant who selects a military license plate or specialty license plate in lieu of the “DV” plate will not be afforded the same protections and rights of the “DV” plate relating to disabled parking accessibility and free parking for vehicles displaying the “DV” plate.⁷⁰

Military License Plates

Florida offers Special Military License Plates, which have specific eligibility requirements that must be met upon application and required payment of the license tax for the vehicle, if applicable, before the plate can be issued.⁷¹ Section 320.089, F.S., authorizes the majority of these special military plates, which include several plates for veterans, plates for National Guard members and former prisoners of war, and plates for military members who have been awarded specific honors such as combat badges, ribbons, and medals. General revenue generated from the sale of military plates issued under s. 320.089, F.S., is distributed to the FDVA trust funds to be used as follows:

- The first \$100,000 is to be used for the common benefit of the residents of Florida Veterans’ Nursing Homes.⁷²
- Any additional revenue is to be used to support program operations that benefit veterans or the operation, maintenance, or construction of domiciliary and nursing homes for veterans.⁷³
- Except for the revenue from the “Woman Veteran” license plate, which is to be used solely for creating and implementing programs to benefit women veterans.⁷⁴

Specialty License Plates

As of February 2025, there are 133 specialty license plates authorized by the Legislature. Of these plates, 113 are available for immediate purchase and 20 are in the presale process.⁷⁵ Specialty license plates are available to an owner or lessee of a motor vehicle who is willing to pay an annual use fee, ranging from \$15 to \$25, paid in addition to required license taxes and

⁶⁷ Section 526.141(5)(a), F.S.

⁶⁸ See U.S. Access Board, *Guide to the ADA Accessibility Standards: Guidance on the International Symbol of Accessibility* (March 27, 2017), available at <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/guides/guidance-on-the-isa/> (last visited March 25, 2025).

⁶⁹ Ch. 2024-272, F.S. See s. 320.084 (1) and (6), F.S.

⁷⁰ Section 320.084(6), F.S.

⁷¹ See ss. 320.0845, 320.0846, 320.089, 320.0891, 320.0892, 320.0893, F.S. A full-listing of the military plates offered by the DHSMV, available at https://www.flhsmv.gov/pdf/specialtyplates/military_brochure.pdf (last visited March 26, 2025).

⁷² Section 320.089(1)(c), F.S.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ Section 320.089(1)(d), F.S.

⁷⁵ DHSMV, *Senate Bill 620 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis* (February 26, 2025) (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

service fees.⁷⁶ The annual use fees are distributed to organizations in support of a particular cause or charity signified on the plate's design and designated in statute.⁷⁷

Florida National Guard

The National Guard is unique among militia in that it serves the country in both the local community and overseas. The dual mission of a National Guard member means that each member serves through both the National Guard of the state and through the U.S. Army or the U.S. Air Force.⁷⁸ A member of the Florida National Guard (FNG) serves either in the state Army National Guard or in the state Air National Guard, considered a reserve component of each of those armed forces.⁷⁹ Overseeing the FNG as a federally-recognized officer, the adjutant general is appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation.⁸⁰

The Department of Military Affairs provides management oversight and administrative support to the FNG.⁸¹

Driver Licenses

A driver license in this state is a certificate that, subject to all other requirements of law, authorizes an individual to drive a motor vehicle and denotes a motor vehicle operator's license as defined in 49 U.S.C. s. 30301.⁸² Florida driver licenses may include endorsements which permits the driver to drive certain types of vehicles or to transport certain types of property or a certain number of passengers.⁸³

Non-Commercial Driver Licenses

A person with a Class E driver license may drive any noncommercial motor vehicle with Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) less than 26,001 pounds, which includes a passenger car, 15 passenger van including the driver, trucks or recreational vehicles and two or three wheel motor vehicles 50 cc or less, such as mopeds or small scooters.⁸⁴ A Class E learner's license permits a person to drive a motor vehicle less than 8,000 pounds. A learner's license has the following conditions, the person:

- Must have a licensed driver at least 21 years old occupying the closest seat to the right of the driver;
- Can only drive during daylight hours during the first three months from the original issue date and until 10:00 p.m., thereafter; and

⁷⁶ Section 320.08056(3)(d), F.S., provides that except if specifically provided in s. 320.08056(4), the annual use fee for a specialty license plate is \$25.

⁷⁷ Section 320.08058, F.S.

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ Section 250.01(3), (6), and (13), F.S.

⁸⁰ Section 250.10(1), F.S.

⁸¹ Dep't of Military Affairs, *Home Page*, available at <https://dma.myflorida.com/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

⁸² Section 322.01(18), F.S.

⁸³ Section 322.01(19), F.S.

⁸⁴ DHSMV, *Driver Licenses & ID Cards*, available at <https://www.flhsmv.gov/driver-licenses-id-cards/general-information/license-classes-endorsements-designations/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

- Is not allowed to operate motorcycles.^{85,86}

For a person authorized to operate a motorcycle, a “motorcycle also” endorsement will be indicated by an “A” in the endorsement field located on the front of the card and “A-MTRCL Also” on the back of the card in the endorsement field.⁸⁷ A “motorcycle only” endorsement will be indicated by an “O” in the endorsement field located on the front of the card and an “O-MTRCL Only” on the back of the card in the endorsement field.⁸⁸

Commercial Driver Licenses

A commercial driver license means a Class A, Class B, or Class C driver license issued in accordance with the requirements of ch. 322, F.S. According to the DHSMV, the following are commercial driver license endorsements with their descriptions:

- Class A: Trucks or truck combinations weighing with a GVWR of 26,001 lbs. or more, provided towed vehicle is more than 10,000 lbs.
- Class B: Straight trucks weighing 26,001 lbs. GVWR or more.
- Class C: Vehicles transporting hazardous materials⁸⁹ which are required to be placarded, or vehicles designed to transport more than 15 persons including the driver with a GVWR of less than 26,001 lbs.⁹⁰

Identification Cards

Any person who is 5 years of age or older, or any person who has a disability, regardless of age, who applies for a disabled parking permit under s. 320.0848, F.S., may be issued an identification card by the DHSMV upon completion of an application and payment of an application fee.⁹¹

Driver license and identification card fees vary. The following is a sampling of those fees:

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ Section 322.01(28), F.S., defines “motorcycle” to mean any means any self-propelled vehicle, including a motor vehicle combination, not operated upon rails or guideway, excluding vehicles moved solely by human power, motorized wheelchairs, and electric bicycles, as defined in s. 316.003, F.S.

⁸⁷ DHSMV *supra* note 84.

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ Section 322.01(25), F.S. *See* 49 U.S.C. s. 5103, subpart F of 49 C.F.R. part 172, and 42 C.F.R. part 73.

⁹⁰ DHSMV *supra* note 84.

⁹¹ Section 322.051(1), F.S.

Driver License and Identification Card Fees		
Original or Renewal Commercial Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 75.00
Conditional Commercial Driver License ⁹²	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Commercial Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Driver License Restricted to Motorcycle Use	s. 322.21(1)(d), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Replacement Driver License (if lost or destroyed)	s. 322.21(1)(e), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Original, Renewal, or Replacement Identification Card	s. 322.21(1)(f), F.S.	\$ 25.00

Fee Exemptions

Any member of the Armed Forces or his or her spouse, daughter, son, stepdaughter, or stepson, who holds a Florida driver license and who presents an affidavit showing that he or she was out of the state due to service in the Armed Forces of the United States at the time of license expiration is exempt from paying the delinquent fee if the application for renewal is made within 15 months after the expiration of his or her license and within 90 days after the date of discharge or transfer to a military or naval establishment in this state as shown in the affidavit. However, such a person is not exempt from any reexamination requirement.⁹³

Any veteran honorably discharged from the Armed Forces who has been issued a valid identification card by the FDVA in accordance with s. 295.17, F.S., has been determined by the VA or its predecessor to have a 100-percent total and permanent service-connected disability rating for compensation, or has been determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent, is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Forces, and who is qualified to obtain a driver license under ch. 322, F.S., is exempt from all fees required by s. 322.21, F.S.⁹⁴

An applicant for an identification card who meets any of the following criteria is exempt from the fee for an original, renewal, or replacement identification card:

- The applicant presents a valid Florida voter's registration card to the DHSMV and attests that he or she is experiencing a financial hardship.
- The applicant presents evidence satisfactory to the DHSMV that he or she is homeless as defined in s. 414.0252(7), F.S.
- The applicant presents evidence satisfactory to the DHSMV that his or her annual income is at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level.
- The applicant is a juvenile offender who is in the custody or under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Justice, who is receiving services pursuant to s. 985.461, F.S., and whose identification card is issued by the DHSMV's mobile issuing units.⁹⁵

⁹² Section 322.21(1)(a), F.S., provides that if an applicant has completed training and is applying for employment or is currently employed in a public or nonpublic school system that requires the commercial license, the fee is the same as for a Class E driver license, which is \$48 as specified in s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.

⁹³ Section 322.21(6), F.S.

⁹⁴ Section 322.21(7), F.S.

⁹⁵ Section 322.21(1)(f), F.S.

An applicant for an identification card who is 80 years of age or older and whose driving privilege is denied due to failure to pass a vision test administered in accordance with s. 322.18(5), F.S., is exempt from the fee for an original identification card.⁹⁶

Veterans Treatment Court Program

Veteran treatment courts are problem-solving courts addressing the root causes of criminal behavior.⁹⁷ Modeled after drug court treatment programs, veteran treatment courts divert eligible veterans and servicemembers into treatment programs for military-related conditions or war-related trauma, including:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Mental illness;
- Traumatic brain injury; and
- Substance abuse.⁹⁸

In 2012, the Legislature authorized each judicial circuit to establish the Military Veterans and Servicemembers Court Program, to serve veterans⁹⁹ and servicemembers¹⁰⁰ who are convicted of a criminal offense and who suffer from a military-related mental illness, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse disorder, or psychological problem.¹⁰¹ Under the court program such defendants could be sentenced in accordance with general law,¹⁰² in a manner that appropriately addressed the severity of the illnesses or conditions through services tailored to the individual needs of a participant.¹⁰³

In 2021, the Legislature revised and redesignated the existing military veterans and servicemembers court program, as the veterans treatment court program to create a statewide standard for the creation, operation and effort to detect, discern, and assist veterans in correcting the behaviors and choices that lead to the veterans' court involvement.¹⁰⁴ The purpose of a veterans treatment court program is to address the underlying causes of a veteran's involvement with the judicial system through the use of specialized dockets, multidisciplinary teams, and evidence-based treatment.¹⁰⁵ A veterans treatment court program must use nonadversarial approaches to resolve such underlying causes.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ Florida State Courts, *Problem-Solving Courts*, available at <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/court-improvement/problem-solving-courts/> (last visited March 20, 2025).

⁹⁸ Florida State Courts, *Problem-Solving Courts - Veterans Courts*, available at <https://www.flcourts.gov/Resources-Services/Office-of-Problem-Solving-Courts/Veterans-Courts> (last visited Mar20 2025).

⁹⁹ Section 1.01, F.S. (2012).

¹⁰⁰ Section 250.01, F.S. (2012).

¹⁰¹ Ch. 2012-159, Laws of Fla.

¹⁰² Ch. 921, F.S. (2012).

¹⁰³ Ch. 2012-159, Laws of Fla.

¹⁰⁴ Section 394.47891(1), F.S.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

A court with jurisdiction over criminal cases is authorized to create and administer a veterans treatment court and a chief judge may issue administrative orders regarding such court.¹⁰⁷ A veterans treatment court program may adjudicate misdemeanors and felonies.¹⁰⁸ In addition, under current law:

- The chief judge may issue administrative orders concerning the program.
- The chief judge and state attorney of the judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program have the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program within the circuit.¹⁰⁹

Current law requires a veterans treatment program to adopt policies and procedures to implement key components of a veterans treatment program,¹¹⁰ and in addition, the veterans treatment program is authorized to adopt supplemental policies and procedures.¹¹¹ Each veterans treatment court program must seek input from the state attorney and other interested persons in developing and adopting such policies and procedures.¹¹² The veterans treatment court program must also create a record of the adopted policies and procedures.¹¹³

Eligibility and Admission

In accordance with s. 394.47891, F.S., a defendant means a veteran¹¹⁴ or servicemember¹¹⁵ who has been charged with or convicted of a crime.¹¹⁶

A defendant may participate in a veterans treatment court program if he or she is approved by the state attorney, in consultation with the court, and meets the following criteria:

- The defendant has a service-related mental health condition, service-related traumatic brain injury, service-related substance use disorder, or service-related psychological problem or has experienced military sexual trauma.
- The defendant's participation in the veterans treatment court program is in the interest of justice and of benefit to the defendant and the community.¹¹⁷

In making a determination of the foregoing, the state attorney, in consultation with the court, must consider:

- The nature and circumstances of the offense charged.

¹⁰⁷ Section 394.47891(3)(a), F.S.

¹⁰⁸ Section 394.47891(3)(b), F.S.

¹⁰⁹ Section 394.47891(3)(c) and (d), F.S.

¹¹⁰ Section 394.47891(6)(a), F.S.

¹¹¹ Section 394.47891(7), F.S.

¹¹² Section 394.47891(5)(a), F.S.

¹¹³ Section 394.47891(5)(b), F.S.

¹¹⁴ Section 394.47891(3)(d), F.S., for purposes of the veterans treatment court programs, "veteran" is defined as a person who has served in the military.

¹¹⁵ Section 394.47891(2)(c), F.S., for purposes of the veterans treatment court programs, servicemember is defined as a member of the active or reserve components of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, or Coast Guard; a member of the Florida National Guard; a current or former contractor for the United States Department of Defense; or a current or former military member of a foreign allied country.

¹¹⁶ Section 394.47891(2)(a), F.S.

¹¹⁷ Section 394.47891(8)(a), F.S.

- The special characteristics or circumstances of the defendant and any victim or alleged victim, including any recommendation of the victim or alleged victim.
- The defendant's criminal history and whether the defendant previously participated in a veterans treatment court program or similar program.
- Whether the defendant's needs exceed the treatment resources available to the veterans treatment court program.
- The impact on the community of the defendant's participation and treatment in the veterans treatment court program.
- Recommendations of any law enforcement agency involved in investigating or arresting the defendant.
- If the defendant owes restitution, the likelihood of payment during the defendant's participation in the veterans treatment court program.
- Any mitigating circumstances.
- Any other circumstances reasonably related to the defendant's case.¹¹⁸

A defendant who meets those eligibility requirements may be admitted to a veterans treatment court program at any stage of a criminal proceeding and must submit an application to the state attorney if he or she is seeking to participate in the program.¹¹⁹ The state attorney must review each application and determine whether the defendant meets the eligibility requirements under the provisions of s. 394.47891(8), F.S.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Official State Flagship

The bill amends s. 15.0465, F.S., redesignating the official state flagship as the S.S. American Victory, a 455-foot historic steamship built in 1944.

State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education and Training

The bill amends s. 295.124, F.S., to update the federal law reference for the designation of the state approving agency for purposes of veterans' education and training. The updated reference is 38 U.S.C. s. 3671.¹²⁰

Florida is for Veterans, Inc.

The bill amends s. 295.21, F.S., renaming the VETS program as the Veterans Florida Opportunity (VFO) Program to conform with the bill provisions in s. 295.22, F.S. Additionally, the bill clarifies that the three members appointed by the Governor, three members appointed by the President of the Senate, and three members appointed by Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives are all voting members of the Veterans Florida board of directors (board). The bill also revises the membership of the board to include an additional member who is appointed by the Governor who is a secretary, or his or her designee, with experience in economic or

¹¹⁸ Section 394.47891(8)(b), F.S.

¹¹⁹ Section 394.47891(4), F.S.

¹²⁰ 38 U.S.C. s. 3671 (2021). See United States Code available at <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title38-section1771&num=0&edition=prelim> (last visited March 20, 2025).

workforce development from an executive agency. Such member will be an ex officio, nonvoting member.

Veterans Employment and Training Services

The bill amends s. 295.22, F.S., renaming the VETS program as the VFO Program.

Grant Program

The bill also:

- Revises the limits of grant reimbursements to \$5,000 per eligible trainee per fiscal year, rather than the \$8,000 cost and expenditure total limitation per trainee.
- Removes the reimbursement limit of 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran for a qualified business.
- Removes the requirement that the veteran be a permanent, full-time employee of a qualified business in order to receive a training reimbursement.
- Requires that training costs for a trainee in a fiscal year be equal to or greater than \$5,000.
- Clarifies that the duration, not estimated duration, of the instructional program be identified as part of the grant agreement between Veterans Florida and the business requesting funds.

The bill authorizes grant funds to be used as educational stipends for individuals in the target market¹²¹ while training at any location of the UF/IFAS within this state. Veterans Florida and the UF are required to enter into an agreement before any grant funds are expended, and Veterans Florida is required to determine the amount and structure of any educational stipend. Such stipend may be used only for such training for a period of at least 4 months and no more than 6 months, in the absence of veteran-specific federally funded programs.

For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the FDVA for purposes of funding Veterans Florida administration and implementation of programs.¹²²

Exemptions-Department of State Filing Fees

The bill creates s. 295.25, F.S., to exempt veterans who are state residents from having to pay applicable 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, exempted in the bill, are as follows:

¹²¹ Section 295.21(3)(a), F.S.

¹²² Sections 295.21(3)(d), 295.21(3)(f), and 295.22, F.S., describe those programs Veterans Florida administers and implements including, Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and other relevant programs.

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

The bill provides that a veteran may apply for this exemption only once.

Disabled Veteran License Plates

The bill amends s. 320.084, F.S., to require that a free disabled veteran motor vehicle license number plate, rather than a “DV” motor vehicle license number plate, be issued by the DHSMV for use on any motor vehicle owned or leased by any disabled veteran who has been a resident of this state continuously for the preceding 5 years or has established a domicile in this state¹²³ and who has been honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces, upon application. Such application must be accompanied by proof that the applicant:

- Has a vehicle that was initially acquired through financial assistance by the VA or its predecessor specifically for the purchase of an automobile;
- Has been determined by the VA or its predecessor to have a service-connected 100-percent disability rating for compensation; or
- Has been determined to have a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent and is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Services.

The bill also provides that upon receipt of proof of continued eligibility, the DHSMV must issue a new permanent disabled veteran motor vehicle license plate, the design of which will be red, white, and blue similar to the colors of the United States flag. The bill deletes the requirement that such plates be issued with the “DV” letter designation.

The bill provides that a disabled veteran who qualifies for the disabled veteran license plate, in lieu of such a plate, may be issued a military license plate, if he or she is eligible, or a specialty license plate embossed with the initials “DV” in the top left-hand corner. The disabled veteran selecting a military plate or a specialty plate must pay all applicable fees related to such a military or specialty license plate but is not required to pay the fees associated with the disabled veteran motor vehicle license plate under s. 322.084(1) and (4), F.S. In addition, the bill provides that a military license plate or specialty license plate with the “DV” embossing is provided the same protections and rights of the disabled veteran license plate relating to certain disabled

¹²³ Section 222.17(1), (2), and (3), F.S., provides the manner in which a person must prove domicile in the State of Florida under s. 320.084, F.S.

parking accessibility and free parking for vehicles displaying the disabled veteran license plate,¹²⁴ with certain exclusions.¹²⁵

Fee Exemptions - Driver License and Identification Card

The bill amends s. 322.21, F.S., to exempt a member of the FNG who has been issued a valid identification card by the Department of Military Affairs and his or her spouse from the following fees:

Driver License and Identification Card Fees		
Original or Renewal Commercial Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 75.00
Conditional Commercial Driver License ¹²⁶	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Commercial Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(a), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Renewal or Extension of a Class E Driver License Delinquent Fee	s. 322.21(1)(c), F.S.	\$ 15.00
Original Driver License Restricted to Motorcycle Use	s. 322.21(1)(d), F.S.	\$ 48.00
Replacement Driver License (if lost or destroyed)	s. 322.21(1)(e), F.S.	\$ 25.00
Original, Renewal, or Replacement Identification Card	s. 322.21(1)(f), F.S.	\$ 25.00

Veterans Treatment Court Programs

The bill amends s. 394.47891, F.S., deleting the provision that the state attorney of a judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program is part of an exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veteran treatment court program of the circuit. The state attorney may still consult with the court on a defendant's eligibility and his or her admission to the veteran treatment court program.¹²⁷ As a result of the deletion, the bill provides that the chief judge of the judicial circuit that creates and administers a veterans treatment court program has the exclusive authority to determine whether veterans who have been dishonorably discharged may participate in the veterans treatment court program of the circuit.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

¹²⁴ Sections 316.1955, 316.1964, and 320.0848, F.S.

¹²⁵ See ss. 526.141 and 553.5041, F.S.

¹²⁶ Section 322.21, (1)(a), F.S., provides that if an applicant has completed training and is applying for employment or is currently employed in a public or nonpublic school system that requires the commercial license, the fee is the same as for a Class E driver license, which is \$48 as specified in s. 322.21(1)(b), F.S.

¹²⁷ Section 394.47891(4) and (8), F.S.

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:

The bill does not create new fees, however it exempts certain servicemembers and veterans from certain state filing fees and driver license and identification card fees.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill authorizes the use of grant funds as educational stipends for trainees with the UF/IFAS as part of an agreement required by the bill between Veterans Florida and UF. The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on those trainees who qualify for, and receive, an educational stipend, in addition to any training received through the Veterans Florida programs.

The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on veterans who are state residents. Such individuals may be eligible for a one-time exemption from the DOS filing fees for articles of organization, articles of incorporation, certificate of limited partnership, partnership registration statement, or designation as a registered agent.

The bill may have a positive fiscal impact on FNG members and their spouses who qualify under one of the new exemptions. Such individuals may request the DHSMV to issue, replace, or renew certain driver licenses and identification cards at no charge. In addition, such individuals may also request a delinquent fee exemption.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill authorizes the use of grant funds as educational stipends for trainees with the UF/IFAS as part of an agreement required by the bill between Veterans Florida and UF. Further, the bill revises the limits of grant reimbursements to \$5,000 per eligible trainee per fiscal year, rather than the \$8,000 cost and expenditure total limitation per trainee. The foregoing program modifications to the use of grant funds may result in an increase

in training costs for an eligible trainee and have the effect of reducing the number of applicants that may be trained with the same level of funding.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state for the one-time exemption from the DOS filing fees for articles of organization, articles of incorporation, certificate of limited partnership, partnership registration statement, or designation as a registered agent, for veterans who reside in this state.

The bill may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the state for the exemptions from driver license and identification card fees for FNG members and their spouses.

The bill appropriates \$2.5 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the FDVA, for Veterans Florida for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for the administration and implementation of programs. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the Legislature appropriated \$2.4 million in nonrecurring funds to the FDVA for Veterans Florida for the administration and implementation of programs.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 15.0465, 320.084, 295.124, 295.21, 295.22, 322.21, and 394.47891.

This bill creates section 295.25 of the Florida Statutes.

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 Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on March 25, 2025:

The committee substitute:

- Revises the title of the bill as “military affairs” to reflect the provisions of the bill.
- Redesignates the official state flagship as the S.S. American Victory.
- Requires that a free disabled veteran motor vehicle license plate be issued by the DHSMV for use on any motor vehicle owned or leased by certain disabled veterans, which revises the current requirement that the license plates be issued with the identifying letter designation of “DV.”
- Authorizes an eligible disabled veteran be issued, in lieu of a disabled veteran license plate, a military license plate or a specialty plate embossed with the initials “DV” in

the top left-hand corner of the plate, which affords certain protections and rights associated with disabled veteran motor vehicle license plate.

- Deleted provisions regarding reduced fees for persons who are active or retired servicemembers for resident lifetime hunting licenses and resident lifetime sportsman's licenses.

B. Amendments:

None.

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