

By Senator Martin

33-01178-25

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the Florida State Guard; amending s. 115.07, F.S.; authorizing leaves of absence for members of the Florida State Guard when they are engaged in certain ordered training; revising legislative intent; amending s. 258.0145, F.S.; providing a discount on annual entrance passes to state parks for current members of the Florida State Guard; amending s. 379.354, F.S.; creating and specifying the annual fee for the Florida State Guard gold sportsman's license for hunting and fishing; specifying application requirements for the license; providing construction; creating s. 1009.8959, F.S.; creating the Florida State Guard Scholarship Program for a specified purpose; requiring the Department of Education to administer the program according to rules and procedures established by the State Board of Education; specifying eligibility requirements for initial and recurring funding under the program; providing for the issuance of awards under the program; requiring the Department of Education to issue the awards annually, subject to legislative appropriation; specifying requirements if appropriated funds are not sufficient to fully fund awards; requiring the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to adopt rules and regulations, respectively; providing an effective date.

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

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Section 1. Subsections (1) and (4) of section 115.07, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

115.07 Officers and employees' leaves of absence for reserve or guard training.—

(1) All officers or employees of the state, of the several counties of the state, and of the municipalities or political subdivisions of the state who are commissioned reserve officers or reserve enlisted personnel in the United States military or naval service, ~~or~~ members of the National Guard, or members of the Florida State Guard are entitled to leaves of absence from their respective duties, without loss of vacation leave, pay, time, or efficiency rating, on all days during which they are engaged in training ordered under the provisions of the United States military or naval training regulations for such personnel when assigned to active or inactive duty or training ordered by the Florida State Guard, as applicable.

(4) It is the intent of the Legislature that the state, its several counties, and its municipalities and political subdivisions shall grant leaves of absence for active or inactive training to all employees who are members of the United States Reserve Forces or the National Guard or members of the Florida State Guard, to ensure the state and national security at all times through a strong armed force of qualified and mobilization-ready personnel.

Section 2. Section 258.0145, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

258.0145 Military, Florida State Guard, law enforcement, and firefighter state park fee discounts.—The Division of

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Recreation and Parks shall provide the following discounts on park fees to persons who present written documentation satisfactory to the division which evidences their eligibility for the discounts:

(1) Active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard, or reserve components thereof shall receive a 25-percent discount on annual entrance passes.

(2) Current members of the Florida State Guard shall receive a 15-percent discount on annual entrance passes.

(3) Honorably discharged veterans who have service-connected disabilities shall receive lifetime family annual entrance passes at no charge.

~~(4)(3)~~ Surviving spouses and parents of deceased members of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard, or reserve components thereof who have fallen in combat shall receive lifetime family annual entrance passes at no charge.

~~(5)(4)~~ The surviving spouse and parents of a law enforcement officer, as defined in s. 943.10(1), or a firefighter, as defined in s. 633.102, who has died in the line of duty shall receive lifetime family annual entrance passes at no charge.

Section 3. Present paragraph (k) of subsection (4) of section 379.354, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as paragraph (1), and a new paragraph (k) is added to that subsection, to read:

379.354 Recreational licenses, permits, and authorization numbers; fees established.—

(4) RESIDENT HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES.—The licenses and

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fees for residents participating in hunting and fishing activities in this state are as follows:

(k) Annual Florida State Guard gold sportsman's license, \$34.48. A resident who is a current member of the Florida State Guard may purchase the Florida State Guard gold sportsman's license upon presenting a current Florida State Guard identification card. The annual Florida State Guard gold sportsman's license authorizes the same activities as the annual gold sportsman's license.

Section 4. Section 1009.8959, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1009.8959 The Florida State Guard Scholarship Program.—

(1) The Florida State Guard Scholarship Program is created to reward members of the Florida State Guard enrolled in eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary educational institutions who meet the eligibility criteria established in subsection (2). The Department of Education shall administer the program according to rules and procedures established by the State Board of Education.

(2) To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the program, an individual must meet all of the following criteria:

(a) Have completed 4 years of active service with the Florida State Guard.

(b) Have graduated with a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.

(c) Be a current or former member the Florida State Guard in good standing as determined by rules adopted by the director of the Florida State Guard.

(d) Have not yet earned a baccalaureate degree.

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117       (e) Be enrolled in a career certificate or an associate or  
118 a baccalaureate degree program at a state university, a Florida  
119 College System institution, or an independent Florida college or  
120 university that is eligible to participate in the William L.  
121 Boyd, IV, Effective Access to Student Education Grant Program  
122 under s. 1009.89.

123       (3) To be eligible for continued scholarship funding under  
124 the program, an individual must:

125           (a) Enroll in at least 6 credit hours per semester; and

126           (b) Earn at least 24 semester credit hours in the last  
127 academic year or the academic year in which the student earned  
128 the scholarship, if the student was enrolled full time; or a  
129 prorated number of credit hours as determined by the Department  
130 of Education if the student was enrolled for less than full time  
131 for any part of the academic year.

132       (4) The Department of Education shall issue awards as  
133 follows:

134           (a) Students enrolled in a state university or a Florida  
135 College System institution are eligible for an award equal to  
136 100 percent of tuition and fees.

137           (b) Students enrolled in an eligible independent Florida  
138 college or university are eligible for a fixed award calculated  
139 by using the average tuition and fee calculation as prescribed  
140 by the Department of Education for full-time attendance at a  
141 public postsecondary education institution at the comparable  
142 level.

143           (c) A stipend for textbooks may be granted if the  
144 Legislature appropriates sufficient funding to cover the cost of  
145 such stipends.

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146       (d) Students may receive an award for a maximum of 100  
147 percent of the number of credits required to complete a  
148 baccalaureate degree program.

149       (5) The Department of Education shall issue awards from the  
150 scholarship program annually, subject to the appropriation of  
151 funds by the Legislature. If funds appropriated are not adequate  
152 to provide the maximum allowable award to each eligible  
153 applicant, awards in all components of the program must be  
154 prorated using the same percentage reduction.

155       (6) The State Board of Education and the Board of Governors  
156 shall adopt rules and regulations, respectively, to implement  
157 this program.

158       Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.