



Legislature Sends Veterans Bill to Governor

More than 1.5 million veterans live in Florida, about 75 percent of whom are wartime veterans, including more than 231,000 from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and roughly 498,000 Vietnam-era veterans. There are also approximately 188,500 military retirees who call Florida home and more than 61,000 active duty military personnel living in the state.

On Tuesday, the day Florida celebrated Military Day, the Senate unanimously passed [CS/CS/HB 7015](#) and sent it to Governor Scott for his signature. Among others, the bill addresses the following issues:

Encroachment: The bill appropriates \$7,489,975 in nonrecurring funds to the Department of Environmental Protection to acquire land adjacent to military installations to protect against encroachment.

Armories: The bill appropriates \$12.5 million in nonrecurring funds to the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to continue renovations to state readiness centers (armories).

Education: The bill creates the "Congressman C.W. Bill Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program," which waives out-of-state fees for honorably discharged veterans. In addition, the bill appropriates \$1.53 million in recurring funds to the DMA to fund tuition scholarships and book stipends for National Guard members, and \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds for information technology upgrades to administer the education assistance program.

Employment: The bill expands Florida's veterans' preference in public employment statutes. In addition, the bill authorizes private sector employers to establish a voluntary veterans' preference process for honorably discharged veterans and certain spouses. The bill also creates Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., to promote Florida to retired and recently separated military service members. Further, the bill revises the Department of Business and Professional Regulation and Department of Health licensure statutes to expand career opportunities for veterans and their spouses.

Florida Veterans' Walk of Honor and Florida Veterans' Memorial Garden: The bill authorizes the creation of the Florida Veterans' Walk of Honor and Florida Veterans' Memorial Garden to recognize and honor those military veterans who have made significant contributions to the state through their service to the United States.

The bill appropriates a total of \$21,769,975 in General Revenue. Florida colleges, state universities, and career centers will experience an estimated loss of \$11.7 million as a result of student veterans being exempt from out-of-state fees.