FLORIDA'S 2021 MILITARY-FRIENDLY GUIDE

A Summary of Sunshine State Laws, Policies, Programs and Benefits for Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers, Veterans, Retirees and Families

FLORIDA DEFENSE ALLIANCE

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GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome

Dear Servicemember, Veteran and Military Family Member:

On behalf of all Floridians, thank you for your military service and welcome to our great state. As a veteran, I understand the challenges often faced by those who serve our and country at home and abroad; I deeply appreciate your commitment to Florida, the United States and the defense of freedom. Last year, I released study results detailing the $95 billion annual economic impact that Florida's military and defense sectors have on our state. This figure reflects the hard work and investment that our active duty forces and veterans bring to Florida's communities.

As Governor, I will continue to work hard to maintain Florida's reputation as the most military-friendly state in our nation, by implementing initiatives such as the Salute our Soldiers Military Loan Program that offers our military service personnel and veterans mortgage assistance options. Over the last year, I was pleased to announce Florida Defense Support Task Force Grant Program awards of $1.44 million in Fiscal Year 2019-20 and $1.24 million in Fiscal Year 2020-21 to local communities working to protect our military installations around the state. we have also worked with the Legislature to create laws that recognize the unique challenges facing military service members, veterans and their families.

The 2021 Florida Military-Friendly Guide provides information on the laws, programs and benefits Florida has implemented to support and assist military members, veterans and their families. This guide reflects the strong commitment our state has made to support our military and military families.

I hope you find this guide informative and will fully utilize the benefits outlined here. Thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

Ron DeSantis
Governor

ATTORNEY GENERAL

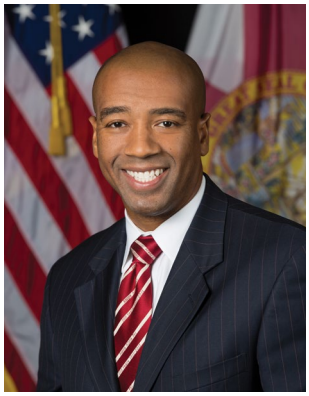
As Attorney General, it is my honor to protect our patriots who call the great State of Florida home. As the oldest of our family recently returned from a deployment, I've recognized the level of service and sacrifice required of military members and their families. As such, I take seriously our duty as public servants to support our military members and their families at home and abroad.

Our Military and Veterans Assistance Program (MVAP) utilizes a multi-agency approach to help educate military members and veterans about the types of scams that target your communities, what you can do to protect yourself, and how you can help protect others by reporting scams and deceptive business practices. By reporting these scams, you help my office build enforcement cases under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act, which imposes heightened penalties against a person or business that willfully victimizes a military member or their family.

On behalf of my family, the Office of Attorney General, and all Floridians, thank you for your service. It is a privilege to serve you. As you read about the services and protections available to you, know that together we can build a stronger, safer Florida for your families and fellow servicemembers.

Ashley Moody
Attorney General

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE



As a USMC veteran and Florida native, we welcome you and your family to our state and hope you can call it home with pride while you are here. We want you to know how much our state appreciates your military service. The military is part of the fabric of our state. Florida is fortunate to have such a thriving military community and rich future connection to all our services, most recently the US Space Force. We want to be sure each military member, family and veteran is aware of how much we value and honor their service. This is why we are and will remain committed to finding new ways to enhance the military quality of life in our Sunshine State.

Thank you to you and your family for your service and for joining us in Florida whether for an assignment or as your permanent home. We are so proud of you and look forward to showing you our appreciation and how important you are to our communities and state.

Jamal Sowell
Florida Secretary of Commerce
President & CEO
Enterprise Florida, Inc.

STATE OF FLORIDA

A Summary of Sunshine State Laws, Policies, Programs and Benefits

For Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers, Veterans, Retirees and Families

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F.S. 250.01(19): '(19) "Servicemember" means any person serving as a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces.'

NOTE: Statutes, benefits and programs apply to all categories: active duty, National Guard and Reserve unless designated/restricted to only components shown in parentheses.

NG = National Guard R = Reserve

This guide can be downloaded at: enterpriseflorida.com/floridadefense

Shaded items are new or changed for 2021.

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PROTECTIONS

Protections: Enforceable by the Office of the State Attorney General & other Law Enforcement Agencies

(For items in this section, you may also refer to the Office of the State Attorney General's Military Consumer Protection Guide 2020 at: http://www.myfloridalegal.com/MilCPGuide)

1. Protection Against Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices

Provides military servicemembers and their family members the same heightened protections afforded to senior citizens and persons with disabilities against deceptive or unfair trade practices; penalizes a person who willfully victimizes a military servicemember or family member. **(F.S. 501.2077)**

2. Protection Against Unfair Insurance Practices

Protects active military service and their covered dependents from unfair practices in certain rate increases in motor vehicle insurance. Provides protection from motor vehicle insurance premium increases or reinstatement fees for new policies. Active military personnel are to be considered maintaining continuous coverage for purposes of determining premium rates. **(F.S. 626.9541)**

3. Protection Against Cancellation of Health Insurance

Any health insurance policy, certificate, or evidence of health coverage which provides coverage to a member of the Florida National Guard, or a member of any branch of the United States military reserves who is a resident of this state, called to active duty or state active duty, must continue all coverages that were in effect for the person, or the person's dependents covered by the same policy, at the premium in effect for all insured under the same contract, unless the employee or insured requests coverage changes that might alter the premium he or she was paying prior to such activation during the time he or she serves on active duty. Additionally, it must reinstate the coverage for any such person who elects not to continue it while on active duty or state active duty, at the person's request upon return from active duty or state active duty, without a waiting period or disqualification for any condition that existed at the time he or she was called to active duty or state active duty. Such reinstatement must be requested within 30 days after returning to work with the same employer or within 60 days if the policy is an individual policy. **(F.S. 250.341)**

4. Protection for Termination of Rental Agreements

Servicemembers who terminate residential leases due to military duty will be protected under the following specific provisions:

- **No Retaliation.** No landlord may sue or otherwise attempt to retaliate against a tenant who terminated a lease because of military duties.
- **No Discrimination.** Landlords may not discriminate against military personnel. Discrimination on the basis of military status creates a cause of action against the landlord for civil damages.
- **Expansion of Criteria which allow a Servicemember to Terminate a Lease.**
  Servicemembers may terminate their leases within the purview of the statute when the servicemember:
  - Moves permanently 35 or more miles from the rental premises;
  - Is prematurely or involuntarily discharged or released from Active Duty;
  - Is released from Active Duty when the leased premises is at least 35 miles from the home of record;
  - Is required or eligible to move into government quarters; and/or

- Moves temporarily for over 60 days to a location which is 35 or more miles from the rental premises.
- **The Liquidated Damages Clause is No Longer Available in the Case of Military Termination of Lease.** Removes provisions requiring the payment of liquidated damages to the landlord under certain circumstances upon termination of a rental agreement. **(F.S. 83.682)**

5. Protection for Termination of Telecommunications Service

Servicemembers may now terminate their telecommunications (i.e. cell phone) service contracts by providing 30 days' notice to the service provider if any of the following occur: 1) The servicemember moves, either permanently or on temporary duty for over 60 days, outside the area which the service provider provides telecommunications service; 2) The servicemember is discharged or released from duty and either returns to an area not serviced by the telecommunications service provider or the servicemember's home of record is not serviced by the provider; and/or 3) The servicemember's orders require a move outside the continental United States. Upon such termination the servicemember is only liable for the amount due under the contract for the period up to the effective date (which is the end of the 30-day notice period). **(F.S. 364.195)**

6. Protection for Termination of Motor Vehicle Leasing

Servicemembers may terminate motor vehicle leases by providing 30 days written notice to the lessor if either the servicemember is required to move outside the continental United States; or the servicemember receives orders for a period exceeding 60 days for duty outside the continental United States or for a temporary change of station. The servicemember is then liable for only the amount due under the contract to the end of the 30-day notice period. The statute specifically states that the lessee is not liable for any other fee due to the early termination of the contract. Further, the protection may not be waived or modified by the contract between the servicemember and the lessor under any circumstances. **(F.S. 520.14)**

7. Protection for Termination of Mobile Home and Vehicle Registration

Any servicemember, whose mobile home registration expired while he or she was serving on active duty or state active duty, shall not be charged with a violation of Florida Statute 320.07 if, at the time of the offense, the servicemember was serving on active duty or state active duty 35 miles or more from the mobile home. The servicemember must present to the department either a copy of the official military orders or a written verification signed by the servicemember's commanding officer to receive a waiver of charges. **(F.S. 320.07)**

8. Protection for Cancellation of Motor Vehicle Insurance

An Insurer must refund 100 percent of the unearned premium if an insured servicemember cancels due to either a call to Active Duty or transfer to a location where the insurance is not required. There is language in the statute preserving claims originating prior to the effective date of cancellation. If the insurer cancels, the insurer must refund 100 percent of the unearned premium. Cancellation is without prejudice to any claim originating prior to the effective date of the cancellation. For purposes of this section, unearned premiums must be computed on a pro rata basis. **(F.S. 627.7283)**

9. Relief for Payment of Initial Binder – Motor Vehicle Insurance

Servicemembers and dependents are not required to pay two month's premium on motor vehicle insurance normally required of citizens of Florida upon initial issuance of insurance. **(F.S. 627.7295)**

10. Protection Against Insurance Rate Increases & Refusal of Policy Renewals for Persons in Military Service

Prohibits insurers from charging an increased premium for reinstating a motor vehicle insurance policy that was canceled or suspended by the insured solely for the reason that he or she was transferred out of this state while serving in the United States Armed Forces or on active duty in the National Guard or United States Armed Forces Reserve. It is also prohibits an insurer from charging an increased premium for a new motor vehicle insurance policy if the applicant for coverage or his or her covered dependents were previously insured with a different insurer and canceled that policy solely for the reason that he or she was transferred out of this state while serving in the United States Armed Forces or on active duty in the National Guard or United States Armed Forces Reserve. For purposes of determining premiums, an insurer shall consider such persons as having maintained continuous coverage. **(F.S. 626.9541)**

No insurer shall fail to renew a policy for reasons based entirely on the sex, occupation, marital status, residence, military service, or age of the insured, or on the principal place of garaging the insured vehicle in this state, or based on any combination of such factors. No insurer shall fail to renew a policy for reasons based on the race, color, creed, or national origin of the insured or for any reason which is arbitrary or capricious. **(F.S. 627.728)**

11. Protection for Termination to Purchase Real Property

Servicemembers may terminate agreements to purchase realty prior to closing if any of the following occur: 1) The servicemember has a permanent change of station which is 35 or more miles from the location of the property; 2) The servicemember is released from Active Duty and the property is more than 35 miles from the servicemember's home of record; 3) The servicemember receives orders requiring him or her to move into government quarters or does, in fact, move into government quarters; or 4) The servicemember receives orders in excess of 90 days which involve a temporary change of station which is 35 miles or more from the property. The seller, mortgagor and/or their agents must refund any funds provided by the servicemember. Further, no other fees may be assessed against the servicemember. These protections cannot be waived or modified. **(F.S. 689.27)**

12. Protection for Sale, Foreclosure or Seizure of Property for Nonpayment

Servicemembers are protected against sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property for nonpayment of any sum due under any obligation, or for breach of the terms of such obligation. These are not valid if made during the period of state active duty or active duty or within 30 days thereafter, unless upon an order previously granted by the court and a return made to and approved by the court. This protection applies only to obligations secured by a mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage upon real or personal property owned by a person in state active duty or active duty at the commencement of the period of state active service and still owed by her or him, which obligation originated prior to such person's period of state active service. **(F.S. 250.5205)**

13. Protection of Late Voting Registration

Provides for deployed servicemembers to be allowed late registration for voting. An individual or accompanying family member who has been discharged or separated from the uniformed services or the United States Merchant Marine, has returned from a military deployment or activation, or has separated from employment outside the territorial limits of the United States, after the book-closing date for an election pursuant to s. 97.055 and who is otherwise qualified may register to vote in such election until 5 p.m. on the Friday before that election. **(F.S. 97.055)**

14. Protection for Absentee Voting

Authorizes absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters to use the federal write-in absentee ballot in any state or local election; prohibiting the supervisor of elections from canvassing federal write-in absentee ballots from overseas voters in certain elections until 10 days after the date of the election. This bill eliminates the restriction that a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) can only be used for state and local elections involving two or more candidates. This allows absent uniformed services and overseas voters to use a FWAB as a "back-up" ballot for all federal, state, and local elections. The law also delays the canvassing of a FWAB until 10 days after the presidential preference primary or general election. This will allow the voter's official absentee ballot to be canvassed (in lieu of a FWAB) if it is received during that 10-day window. **(F.S. 101.6952)**

15. Protection of Identifying Information of Servicemembers

Under Sunset Review Act stands repealed on October 2, 2020

The law provides a public records exemption for military servicemembers and veterans, and their family members. Specifically, the bill creates a public records exemption for the identification and location information of current or former active duty servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces, their reserve components, or the National Guard who served after September 11, 2001, and their spouses and dependents. In order for the exemption to apply, the current or former servicemember must submit to the custodial agency a written request and a written statement that reasonable efforts had been made to protect the identification and location information from being accessible through other means available to the public. **(F.S. 119.071)**

16. Protection of Military Housing from Ad Valorem Taxation

Recognizes in statute that leaseholds and improvements constructed and used to provide housing pursuant to the federal Military Housing Privatization Initiative (Housing Initiative) on land owned by the federal government are exempt from ad valorem taxation. Florida law provides an exemption from ad valorem taxation for property owned by the United States. This exemption specifically applies to leasehold interests

in property owned by the United States government when the lessee serves or performs a governmental, municipal or public purpose or function. Federal law also recognizes the immunity of property of the United States from ad valorem taxation. **(F.S. 196.199)**

17. Protection of Community Planning and Liaison Officers (CPLOs) and Representatives of Military Installations Serving on Local Planning or Zoning Boards

Provides for open exchange of information between local governments and military installations. To facilitate this exchange, a representative of a military installation shall be included as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the local government's land planning or zoning board and is not required to file a statement of financial interest solely due to his/her service on board. **(F.S. 163.3175)**

18. Protection Against Predatory Lenders

This law authorizes the Office of Financial Regulation to deny a license or take disciplinary action against a person who violates the federal Military Lending Act (MLA). The MLA provided greater consumer protections for servicemembers and their family members in connection with a broad range of consumer credit transactions including consumer finance loans, payday loans, title loans, overdraft lines of credit, smaller dollar loans and credit card accounts. Effective Date: October 3, 2016. **(F.S. 516.07)**

19. Protection to Expedite Processing of Rental Agreements

Provides that a landlord, a condominium association, a cooperative association or a home owner's association is required to process a rental application from a military servicemember within seven days of submission, and the landlord must provide to the servicemember a response in writing of the approval or denial of their application and, if denied, the reason for denial. Should the landlord not provide a timely denial of the rental application, the landlord must lease the rental unit to the servicemember if all other terms of the application and lease are met. Effective Date: October 1, 2016. **(F.S. 83.683)**

20. Other General Protections

Unlawful Use of Uniforms, Medals or Insignia, the act adds a provision to an existing law on stolen valor that misusing a military uniform or decorations for the purposes of obtaining employment or seeking election to a paid public office is now a violation of law – Effective Oct. 1, 2020. **(F.S. 817.312)**

The Florida Veterans Protection Act / White Collar Crime Victim Protection Act is an act relating to crimes against veterans; providing a short title; amending s. 775.0844, F.S.; providing an enhanced sentence for any person who commits aggravated white collar crimes against a certain number of veterans by obtaining or attempting to obtain a specified amount of money; providing criminal penalties; providing an effective date. **(F.S. 775.0844)**

LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS, FEES & OTHER BENEFITS

21. Concealed Weapons or Firearms Licenses

Florida concealed weapon or firearm license applications submitted by active military members and veterans are now expedited. Current servicemembers and veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces can be issued concealed weapon or firearm licenses even if they are not 21 years of age, the usual minimum age eligibility requirement, provided that they are otherwise eligible for licensure. **(F.S. 790.062)**

Current servicemembers and military veterans can meet the firearms training/competency requirement for the issuance of a concealed weapon or firearm license if they include proper documentation with their applications reflecting active-duty status or honorable discharge from military service. **(F.S. 790.06)**

Additionally, servicemembers with concealed weapon or firearm licenses who are serving on military orders over 35 miles away from their residence are granted an extension of the normal expiration date of their licenses. In such circumstances, a servicemember's license will not expire, and late fees for renewals will be waived, for 180 days after the date upon which the servicemember returns from serving on military orders. **(F.S. 790.06)**

22. Discounts at State Parks

The Florida Park Service offers the Annual Entrance Pass at a discount or free of charge to persons who present satisfactory written documentation which demonstrates their eligibility.

- 25 percent discount on annual entrance passes for active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.
- Free lifetime military entrance passes for honorably discharged United States veterans who have service-connected disabilities.
- Free lifetime military entrance passes for surviving spouses and parents of deceased members of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard who have fallen in combat. **(FS.258.0145)**

For more information on discounts, go to: www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/AnnualPassDiscounts.pdf

23. Discounts at County Parks

County parks or recreation departments shall provide partial or a full discount on park entrance fees to military members, veterans, and the spouse and parents of certain deceased military members, law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics. **(F.S. 125.029)**

24. Discounts at State Forests

The Florida Forest Service offers the Annual Entrance Pass at a discount or free of charge to persons who present satisfactory written documentation which demonstrates their eligibility.

- $10.00 discount on Annual Entrance Passes for active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard or reserve units of the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard.
- Free Lifetime Military Entrance Passes for honorably discharged United States veterans who have service-connected disabilities. **(Reference: Florida Forest Service, Policy and Procedure Manual)**

25. Specialty Motor Vehicle License Plates

Ex-Prisoner of War, Medal of Honor, Pearl Harbor Survivor, U.S. Paratrooper, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Gold Star, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Combat Action Badge, Vietnam War Veteran, Korean War Veteran, Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Air Force Cross, Operation Desert Shield Veteran, Operation Desert Storm Veteran, and Blue Angels (available in 2020). **(F.S. 320.08058)**

26. Considered Florida Resident for Recreational Fishing and Hunting Licenses

Any member of the United States Armed Forces who is stationed in the state and their family members residing with them are considered Florida residents for the purposes of purchasing recreational fishing and hunting licenses. **(379.101 (30) (b))**

27. Military Gold Sportsman's License

Provides low cost sportsman license to active or retired members of the Armed Forces who are Florida residents. Any Florida resident who is an active or retired member of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Armed Forces Reserve, the Florida National Guard, the United States Coast Guard or the United States Coast Guard Reserve is eligible to purchase the Military Gold Sportsman's License upon submission of a current military identification card and military orders showing that you are stationed in Florida (active members) or a Florida Driver's License and a U.S. Armed Force ID card stating retired. The Military Gold Sportsman's License includes hunting, saltwater fishing and freshwater fishing licenses; and deer, wildlife management area, archery, muzzle-loading gun, crossbow, turkey and Florida waterfowl, snook and lobster permits. It does not include tarpon tags or the federal duck stamp. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) offers the license to active duty and retired military that are stationed in Florida or claim Florida as their primary residence. The reduced-fee annual license ($20) offers the same privileges as the traditional Gold Sportsman's License ($100). Military Gold Sportsman's Licenses can only be purchased at a County Tax Collector's Office. **(F.S. 379.354)**

Recreational hunting and fishing license exemption for 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. **(F.S. 379.353(2)(c))**

28. Operation Outdoor Freedom for Wounded Warriors

Operation Outdoor Freedom is an endeavor of the Florida Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that provides outdoor recreational opportunities to wounded veterans. Designated state and private forest and agricultural lands throughout Florida grant these veterans unique opportunities for recreation and rehabilitation. Participants must be a Florida resident and have a service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or greater, or be a Purple Heart recipient. For more information and to register

for events, please visit www.OperationOutdoorFreedom.com or visit us on Facebook.
(Reference: Florida Forest Service, Policy and Procedure Manual)

29. Use of Military ID in Public Lodging Establishments

Provides that a public lodging establishment classified as a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast inn is required to waive any minimum age policy it may have that restricts accommodations to individuals based on age for individuals who are currently on active duty as a member of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, Reserve Forces, or Coast Guard and who present a valid military identification card. **(F.S. 509.095)**

30. Military ID Valid for Proof When Obtaining Florida Driver's License

This law provides for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to accept a military personnel identification card as proof of a social security card number during the application process to acquire a driver license or identification card. The law further authorizes DHSMV to replace the veteran designation "V" with the word "Veteran" exhibited on the driver license or identification card of a veteran who qualifies and chooses to have such designation. The replacement of the "V" with the word "Veteran" will apply upon implementation of new designs for the driver license and identification card by DHSMV. **(F.S. 322.051)**

31. Identification Card & Driver License Fees for Veterans

This change eliminated the $1 or $2 fee a veteran must pay to have the word "Veteran" displayed on an identification card or driver license issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV). The law also expands the forms of identification that a veteran may present to the DHSMV as proof of veteran status for the purpose of receiving the "Veteran" designation on an identification card or driver license. **(F.S. 322.135)**

32. Motor Vehicle Driver's License Extensions

Servicemembers and family members residing with them are granted an automatic license extension without reexamination when the license expires while serving on active duty outside the state. Active duty members serving outside the state, and family members residing with them, have the option of continuous mail-in renewals for expired driver's licenses, or may apply for an automatic driver's license extension, which will automatically renew the driver's license every year while the member is active duty. **(F.S. 322.121)**

33. Motorcycle License Endorsement

The State of Florida will reciprocate any military motorcycle rider course to have the motorcycle endorsement added to a Florida driver's license. The state also offers various classes and challenge courses at in-state military bases, including the prestigious Level Three Kevin Schwantz Rider Course, of which Florida has two of the eight trainers nationally certified to conduct this course.
(Reference: Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles)

34. Military Commercial Driver's License

The State of Florida offers a Certification of Waiver for military members issued a CDL by a branch of the US Armed Forces, to obtain a Florida CDL, while on active duty or within 120 days of separation of service. With the Certification of Waiver, military members may be exempt from passing the skills test required for a CDL.
(Reference: Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles)

35. Fishing and Hunting Events

Recreational fishing and hunting licenses are not required for permitted events, the primary purpose of which is the rehabilitation or enjoyment of disabled veterans certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces to have a service-connected disability percentage rating of zero or higher or active duty or reserve duty servicemembers of any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the United States Coast Guard, military reserves, the Florida National Guard, or the United States Coast Guard Reserve. A permit issued for an event pursuant to this paragraph shall exempt disabled veterans and active duty or reserve duty servicemembers, the immediate family of such disabled veterans and servicemembers, and one additional person designated to assist a disabled veteran, from possessing a hunting, freshwater fishing, or saltwater fishing license or permit for the duration of the event. Event organizer must apply for and receive an event permit from FWC. **(F.S. 379.353 (2) (q))**

36. Exemption from Hunter Safety Skills Day

Those with military service can receive a Florida hunter safety card by completing one of the online courses, reading the current year's hunting regulations and following the procedures outlined in the Application For Hunter Safety Certification With Previous Firearms Training without having to attend a Hunter Safety Skills Day.
(Reference: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

37. Restricted Species (RS) Endorsement Exemptions — Disabled Military Veteran

Any Florida resident certified to have at least 10% service related disability by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces, shall have the income requirement waived for a period of one year from the end of the current license year (June 30th). This endorsement shall only be issued on an individual Saltwater Products License. Documentation of the qualifying income is not required with the initial application for a restricted species (RS) endorsement. Documentation of the qualifying income will be required to renew the RS thereafter at the reduced $2,500 amount.
(Reference: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

38. Restricted Species (RS) Endorsement Exemptions — Honorably Discharged Military Veteran

The income requirement for a restricted species endorsement shall be waived for a period of one year from the end of the current license year (June 30th) for any Florida resident military veteran who applies to the Commission within 48 months of an honorable discharge from any branch of the United States Armed Forces, the Reserves, the Florida National Guard or the Coast Guard. This exemption is allowed one time per military enlistment and only on an individual Saltwater Products License. **(F.S. 379.361)**

39. Use Tax Exemption for Motor Vehicles Imported from a Foreign Country

Exempts an active servicemember, or spouse, from use tax on the registration or titling of a motor vehicle imported from a foreign country when the vehicle was purchased and used in a foreign country for six (6) months or longer before being imported into Florida and the vehicle is registered or titled in Florida for personal use by the active member or active member's spouse. **(F.S. 212.08(7))**

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE PORTABILITY

Florida Licensure Reciprocity– Florida is the nation's leader in providing licensure reciprocity for military spouses.

Health– Through their VALOR Program, the Florida Department of Health honors all valid and current medical licenses from other states and will issue the same license from Florida for no fee.
www.flhealthsource.gov/valor

Professions– The Department of Business and Professional Regulation honors all valid and current professional licenses from other states and will issue the same license for the corresponding profession from Florida.
www.myfloridalicense.com/DBPR/military-services/military-and-veteran-spouses

Education– The Florida Department of Education honors all valid and current standard or professional teaching certificates from other states and will issue a corresponding Florida certification.
www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/military/#MCFW

Law– The Florida Bar allows active duty military spouses who are members of the bar of other states to practice law in Florida when they accompany a military member stationed in Florida.
https://www.floridabar.org/rules/rrtfb/military-spouse-rule-faq

40. The "Don Hahnfeldt Veteran and Military Family Opportunity Act"

The Act eases professional licensing fees and requirements for certain military members, veterans, and their spouses, including:

- For the Department of Health (DOH) professional licensees, granting current DOH fee waivers for dentists, and providing an affirmative defense in certain unlicensed activity actions;
- For the Department of Business and Professional Regulation professional licensees, expanded license renewal fee waivers and revised licensure eligibility requirements; providing an exemption from certain penalties **(F.S. 455.02 and F.S. 456.024, F.S.)**;
- For the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services professional licensees, expanding current initial licensing fee waivers and creating renewal fee waivers **(F.S. 472.015, 472.016, 493.6105, 493.6107, 493.6113, 501.015, 501.605, 501.607, 501.609, and 507.03)**;
- For the Office of Financial Regulation mortgage loan originators and associated persons licensees, creating an initial licensing and renewal fee waivers and providing an exemption from an application fee; authorizing the licensing authority to recognize certain military issued credentials for purposes of licensure **(F.S. 494.00312 and 494.00313, 497.140, 497.141, 497.281, 497.368, 497.369, 497.370, 497.371, 497.373, 497.374, and 497.375, 497.393, 497.453, 497.466, 497.554, and 497.602)**;
- For the Department of Financial Services professional licensees, relief from pre-licensure insurance coursework requirements, and expanding initial licensure fee waivers **(F.S. 517.12, 527.02 and 539.001)**;
- For the Department of Education (DOE) licensees, creating certain initial fee waivers; granting a temporary certificate in education; establishing a pathway for veteran officers for certification as a school principal; waives certain fees and gives students who are children of an active duty member who is not stationed in this state, but whose home of record or state of legal residence is Florida, priority for attendance in the Florida Virtual School **(F.S. 446.041, 1012.59 and 1002.37)**;
- Protects members of Florida National Guard or the United States Armed Forces Reserves seeking licensure or

qualification for a trade, occupation, or profession if they are ordered into state active duty or into active duty and his or her period of training, study, apprenticeship, or practical experience is interrupted or the start thereof is delayed, he or she is entitled to licensure or qualification under the laws covering his or her licensure or qualification at the time of entrance into active duty **(F.S. 250.483)**;

- Designates March 25 of each year as "Medal of Honor Day," and provides for a character development program that incorporates the values of the Congressional Medal of Honor **(F.S. 683.147and 1002.37)**;
- And requires the Division of State Fire Marshal to waive certain expenses associated with attending the Florida State Fire College **(F.S. 633.444)**.

41. Professional Licensure

Provides that professional licenses issued to any member of the Florida National Guard or the United States Armed Forces Reserves shall not expire while the member is serving on federal active duty and are exempted from all license renewal requirements for the duration of active duty and a period of six months after discharge. Also requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation and its boards to adopt rules to exempt military spouses for license renewal provisions when absent from the state due to his/her spouse's military duty **(F.S. 455.02)**. Additionally, authorizes a spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States to be issued a temporary license to practice a profession in Florida. The applicant's spouse must be on active duty and assigned to a duty station in Florida. The applicant must hold a valid license for the profession in another state, the District of Columbia, any United States territory or possession, or a foreign jurisdiction. The temporary license is valid for six months.

Requires the department to waive the initial licensing fee, the initial application fee, and the initial unlicensed activity fee for military veterans who apply for a license within 24 months of honorable discharge. **(F.S. 455.213)**

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) waives first-time licensing application fees for veterans, their spouses, or a business entity in which the veteran or spouse has a majority ownership stake. Other fees may apply. https://www.fdacs.gov or 800-435-7352

42. Occupational Opportunity Act

This law requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to issue a fee-waived professional renewable license for boards and programs listed under Florida Statute 20.165 for members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty, spouses of members of the Armed Forces, and surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces providing they have proof they hold a valid license for the profession issued by any other state. This law also permits the renewal of such licenses, provided the standard conditions of renewal under the applicable practice act are completed. The law also extends the period of time that active duty members with licenses remain in good standing after discharge from active duty from six months to two years and allows spouses and surviving spouses of active duty members to remain in good standing when they are absent from the state due to their spouse's Armed Forces duties. This law applies to the following boards:

- Board of Architecture and Interior Design
- Board of Auctioneers
- Barbers' Board
- Building Code Administrators and Inspectors Board
- Construction Industry Licensing Board
- Board of Cosmetology
- Electrical Contractors' Licensing Board
- Board of Employee Leasing Companies
- Board of Landscape Architecture
- Board of Pilot Commissioners
- Board of Professional Geologists
- Board of Veterinary Medicine
- Home inspection services licensing program
- Mold-related services licensing program
- Florida Board of Professional Engineers
- Board of Accountancy
- Florida Real Estate Commission
- Florida Real Estate Appraisal Board

(F.S. 455.213)

43. Surveyors and Mappers

For members of Armed Forces in good standing with the board: Any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is now or in the future on active duty and who, at the time of becoming such a member of the Armed Forces, was in good standing with the board and entitled to practice or engage in surveying and mapping in the state shall be kept in good standing by the board, without registering, paying dues or fees, or performing any other act on his or her part to be performed, as long as he or she is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty and for a period of 6 months after discharge from active duty, provided that he or she is not engaged in the practice of surveying or mapping in the private sector for profit.

For family members: The board shall adopt rules exempting the spouses of members of the Armed Forces of the United States from licensure renewal provisions, but only in cases of absence from the state because of their spouses' duties with the Armed Forces. **(F.S. 471.013)**

Spouses of members of the Armed Forces of the United States are exempt from licensure renewal provisions, but only in cases of absence from the state because of their spouses' duties with the Armed Forces. Copies of the military orders requiring the change in duty station must be sent to the Board office in order to qualify for the exemption. Upon receipt of the military orders by the Board office confirming exemption eligibility, the spouse's license will be placed on inactive status with no fee required. Reactivation of the inactive license will not require payment of the fee set forth in Rule 5J-17.070, F.A.C. The license will remain in inactive status for up to two renewal cycles at which time the licensee must either renew this exemption, before expiration, by submitting a current set of orders establishing eligibility for the exemption or reactivate the license. The licensee may reactivate the license by submitting an application for change of status from inactive to active and will not be required to pay the fee set forth in Rule 5J-17.070, F.A.C., nor be required to comply with any rules setting conditions for reactivation of licensure, including continuing education requirements imposed by Section 455.271(10), F.S. If a license is not reactivated nor the exemption renewed by the expiration date, the license shall become delinquent. Reactivation of the delinquent license will not require payment of the fee set forth in Rule 5J-17.070, F.A.C. **(5J-17.007 F.A.C.)**

44. Engineer Licensure/Exam

Allows applicants for professional engineering examinations who are delayed in taking the examination due to reserve or active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces an additional two attempts to take the examination before the board may require additional college-level education or review courses. **(F.S. 471.013)**

45. Practicing Law

Active duty military spouses who are members of the bar of other states may practice law in Florida when they accompany a military member stationed in Florida. Military spouse attorneys seeking admission under Chapter 21 "Military Spouse Authorization to Engage in the Practice of Law in Florida" must meet the eligibility requirements set forth in the rule (https://www.floridabar.org/news-release/bar-announcements/its-now-easier-for-military-spouses-to-practice-law-in-florida).

Eligibility requirements include the following:

- Lawyer must be married to a servicemember and be enrolled in the Department of Defense's "Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System" (or identified and enrolled by the Department of Homeland Security for the Coast Guard when not operating as a service of the Navy);
- Be a law school graduate with a J.D. or LL.B. from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association and hold an active, valid law license in another U.S. jurisdiction;
- Be a member in good standing in every jurisdiction to which they are admitted;
- Not be subject to any discipline or pending disciplinary investigation in any other jurisdiction; reside in Florida or plan to reside in the state in the next six months;
- Not have failed the Florida bar exam within the past five years;
- Pass a character and fitness review by the Florida Board of Bar Examiners;
- Submit an application with a copy of the military member's orders to a duty station within Florida and pay an application fee to the FBBE;
- And read the Rules of Discipline, the Rules of Professional Conduct, and agree to the Supreme Court's jurisdiction for disciplinary purposes.

Once certified under the rule, the new Florida Bar member must complete the basic skills requirement in Rule 6-12 within six months of certification and complete 10 hours of continuing legal education, including two hours of ethics credits, each year in the program. The new Florida Bar member must also be employed by, or in a mentorship relationship with, a member of the Florida Bar who is eligible to practice law in Florida. The Military Affairs Committee will establish a mentor network for this purpose.

A license issued under this rule is subject to annual renewal and fees equal to those paid by active members of the Florida Bar. The duration of a Chapter 21 license will not exceed five years.
The certification to practice law under chapter 21 will terminate if:

- The servicemember is no longer an active duty member of the United States armed forces;
- The certified lawyer is no longer married to the servicemember;
- The servicemember receives a permanent transfer outside of Florida, except that the certified lawyer may continue to practice pursuant to this chapter if the servicemember has been assigned to an unaccompanied or remote assignment with no dependents authorized until the servicemember is assigned to a location with dependents authorized;
- The certified lawyer relocates outside of Florida for more than 6 continuous months;
- The certified lawyer requests that the certification be terminated;
- Five years have elapsed since the certified lawyer was certified; or
- The certified lawyer becomes a member of The Florida Bar by meeting all admission requirements to The Florida Bar

46. Health Professional Licensure

The Florida Department of Health is committed to serving members of the United States Armed Forces, veterans and their families. The Department is proud that over 1.5 million veterans call Florida home, and our continued goal is to make Florida the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. Military veterans and their

families face many challenges. One service the Department offers is the Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response process (VALOR), which provides expedited licensing for honorably discharged veterans and their spouses seeking licensure in most health care professions. Veterans and spouses who apply through the VALOR process receive a waiver of most licensing fees. For information on the program go to www.flhealthsource.gov/valor#veterans.

Several programs and reciprocal licensure arrangements for healthcare professionals are covered under Florida law including:

- Florida provides that health professional licenses issued to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States be kept in good standing without registering, paying dues or fees, or performing any other act on his or her part so long as he or she is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty and for a period of six months after discharge. **(F.S. 456.024) (F.S. 401.271) (F.S. 468.309)**
- A person who serves or has served as a health care practitioner in the U.S. Armed Forces is eligible for licensure in Florida. The applicable department will waive the application fee, licensure fee and unlicensed activity fee for these applicants. **(F.S. 459.00761)**
- Florida exempts the spouse of member of the Armed Forces of the United States from licensure renewal provisions but only in cases of absence from the state because of their spouse's duties with the Armed Forces. **(F.S. 456.024) (F.S. 401.271) (F.S. 468.309)**
- The Agency for Health Care Administration has special consideration for spouses of active duty military that allows them to enroll in Florida Medicaid as a provider. The Department of Health issues a temporary medical license with the status: Temporary Military Active – the licensed practitioner has a spouse serving in the Armed Forces of the United States and is authorized to practice his/her profession in the state of Florida for a period of 12 months. Florida also provides alternative eligibility criteria for military members, and their spouses, seeking licensure as a health care practitioner. Allows military health care practitioners who are practicing under a military platform, which is a training agreement with a non-military health care provider, to be issued a temporary certificate to practice in this state. Provides that a spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is on active duty to be issued a temporary license to practice in Florida. The applicant's spouse must be assigned to a duty station in Florida. The applicant must be otherwise entitled to full licensure under the appropriate practice act, and is eligible to take the respective licensure exam as required in Florida. The applicant must hold a valid license for the profession in another state, the District of Columbia, or a possession or territory of the United States. The temporary license is valid for 12 months after the date of issuance and is non-renewable. An applicant who is issued a temporary professional license to practice as a dentist pursuant to this section must practice under the indirect supervision, as defined in s. 466.003, of a dentist licensed pursuant to chapter 466. **(F.S. 456.024)**
- Provides for transfer of nurse licensing for spouses of military members. An applicant for licensure by endorsement who is relocating to this state pursuant to his or her military-connected spouse's official military orders and who is licensed in another state that is a member of the Nurse Licensure Compact shall be issued a license by endorsement upon submission of the appropriate application and fees and completion of the criminal background check. **(F.S. 464.009)**
- *The Rear Admiral LeRoy Collins, Jr.*, Temporary Certificate for Practice in Areas of Critical Need provides that medical doctors may be issued a limited license to practice in Areas of Critical Need. For experienced military physicians who might not qualify for or are not interested in applying for a full Florida license to practice medicine, this law provides the opportunity to serve Florida patients in those areas where health care is most needed. The physician however must have served as a physician in the United States Armed Forces for at least 10 years and received an honorable discharge from military service. **(F.S. 458.315)**

47. Criminal Justice Officer Certification

Provides for an exemption from completing a full Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission approved law enforcement, correctional, or correctional probation officer basic recruit training program if an applicant has served at least one year as a full-time sworn officer in another state or for the federal government. An applicant who is exempt from completing a Commission-approved basic recruit training program must demonstrate proficiency in the high-liability areas and pass the state officer certification examination (F.S. 943.131). For more information, please visit our website at Officer Requirements (Equivalency of Training) (https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/CJSTC/Officer-Requirements/Equivalency-of-Training.aspx).

48. Military Firefighters Training Requirements

The Florida Department of Financial Services has established OPERATION DISPATCH to allow our military veterans the opportunity to apply comparative experience-based training to fulfill certification requirements to continue protecting the safety and well-being of those in our communities. It is designed to attract military service members and veterans to Florida. OPERATION DISPATCH cuts out redundant training so military-trained firefighters take 40 hours of training specific to Florida standards. OPERATION DISPATCH allows these dedicated men and women to continue meaningful and long-lasting careers in the Florida fire service industry. Through partnerships forged with the Florida Departments of Veterans' and Military Affairs, OPERATION DISPATCH reduces the costs associated with the Florida-specific training and testing to military firefighters. The program also allows participants to take the certification exam in a more timely fashion than the regularly-scheduled quarterly administrations, which upon successful completion helps newly-certified firefighters enter Florida's workforce faster. For more information, visit https://www.myfloridacfo.com/division/sfm/operationdispatch.htm or email Michael.Driggers@MyFloridaCFO.com.

(Reference: Office of the Chief Financial Officer)

49. The Occupational Freedom and Opportunity Act

Among other provisions, this law amends F.S. 322.57 and requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to waive the CDL skills test for honorably discharged veterans whose Military Occupational Specialties were equivalent to a commercial vehicle driver and who have been discharged from the military within the past year. **(F.S. 322.57)** Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities. Amends the State Constitution to authorize the surviving spouse of a deceased combat-related disabled veteran to carry over certain discounts on ad valorem taxes on homestead property until the surviving spouse remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property.

Transfer of Tax Exemption for Veterans: The act adds a provision to an existing law requiring that veterans who were honorably discharged with a service-connected total and permanent disability or their surviving spouses who are entitled to receive ad valorem exemptions on property taxes for one property, may receive a pro-rated reimbursement of taxes paid on any property they buy between January 1 and November 1 of any year.

TAX & FINANCIAL BENEFITS

50. Homestead Exemption on Property Taxes and Ad Valorem Tax Exemption

Authorizes veterans and servicemembers who are deployed in certain military operations to receive additional homestead exemptions as well as ad valorem tax exemptions. Provides that valid military orders transferring military servicemembers are sufficient to maintain permanent residence status of servicemember and spouse for purposes of such determination by property appraiser. This law has been updated in 2016 and expands the designated operations for which deployed servicemembers may qualify and allows the exemption for deployments in newly named operations beginning with deployments in calendar year 2014. It also provides refund procedures for servicemembers who were on qualifying deployments for more than 365 days during the 2014 and 2015 calendar years. In short, the law expands military operations that qualify certain servicemembers who receive a homestead exemption and were deployed during the previous calendar year, to receive additional ad valorem tax exemption on that homestead property.

A 2020 amendment to this law allows veterans or their surviving spouses who are entitled to receive ad valorem exemptions on property taxes for one property, to receive a pro-rated reimbursement of taxes paid on any property they buy between January 1 and November 1 of any year (thus permitting an uninterrupted use of this benefit when selling one homestead to purchase a different one). **(F.S. 196.173)**

Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities. Amends the State Constitution to authorize the surviving spouse of a deceased combat-related disabled veteran to carry over certain discounts on ad valorem taxes on homestead property until the surviving spouse remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property.

Transfer of Tax Exemption for Veterans: The act adds a provision to an existing law requiring that veterans who were honorably discharged with a service-connected total and permanent disability or their surviving spouses who are entitled to receive ad valorem exemptions on property taxes for one property, may receive a pro-rated reimbursement of taxes paid on any property they buy between January 1 and November 1 of any year.

51. Local Business Tax Relief

This law provides an exemption to the local business tax, authorized in ch. 205, F.S., for active duty military servicemembers' spouses who relocate to the county or municipality pursuant to a permanent change of station order. **(F.S. 205)**

52. Salute Our Soldiers Military Loan Program

This program offers military service personnel and veterans who are purchasing a primary residence and meet income and purchase price limits, a 30-year, fixed-rate first mortgage loan at a low rate and with several down payment assistance options. (https://www.floridahousing.org/programs/homebuyer-loan-program-wizards/salute-our-soldiers-military-loan-program)

SALUTE OUR SOLDIERS
MILITARY LOAN PROGRAM

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION & EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION/ASSISTANCE

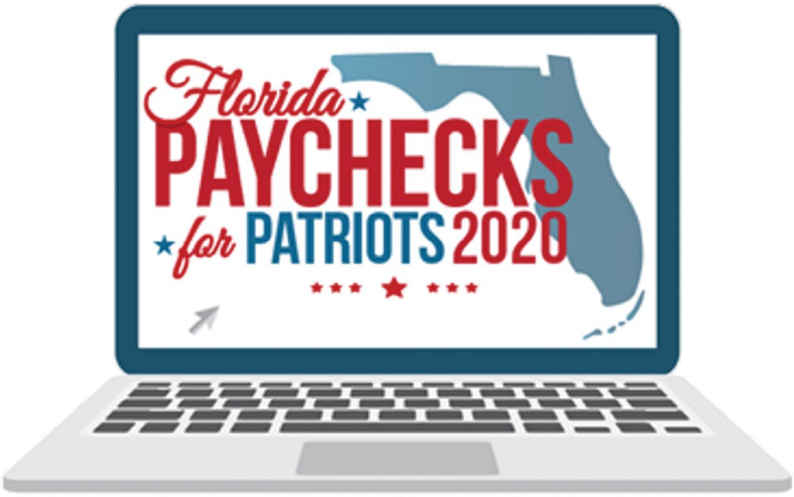
53. Unemployment Compensation for Spouses of Members of the Military

Provides that a person is not disqualified for unemployment compensation benefits who voluntarily leaves employment due to relocation as a result of his or her spouse's military orders. Allows the spouses of active duty military members who voluntarily resign from their jobs to keep the family intact as a result of the military member's change of station orders or deployment to become eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. **(F.S. 443.101)**

54. CareerSource Florida — Employment Advocacy & Assistance

Provides employment assistance to military spouse and dependents. CareerSource shall establish an employment advocacy and assistance program targeting military spouses and dependents. This program shall deliver employment assistance services through military family employment advocates collocated within selected one-stop career centers. Persons eligible for assistance through this program shall include spouses and dependents of active-duty military personnel, Florida National Guard members, and military reservists. Military family employment advocates are responsible for providing the following services and activities: (a) Coordination of employment assistance services through military base family support centers, Florida's one-stop career centers, and veteran support organizations. (b) Training to one-stop career center managers and staff on the unique employment needs and skills of military family members. (c) Promoting and marketing the benefits of employing military family members to prospective employers. (d) Assisting employment-seeking military family members through job counseling, job search and placement services, the dissemination of information on educational and training programs, and the availability of support services. (e) Other employment assistance services CareerSource deems necessary. **(F.S. 445.055)**

Newly launched in 2020, Paychecks for Patriots hiring fairs were hosted by local workforce development boards in conjunction with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, the Florida VA and the Florida National Guard, to connect veterans and military family members with hundreds of employers throughout the state. For more information and the scheduled events visit this website: https://floridajobs.org/paychecks-for-patriots.



55. National Guard Members Employment Protection (NG)

National Guard Servicemembers are protected and will not to be penalized by employers and postsecondary institutions when ordered into state active duty. A private or public employer, or an employing or appointing authority of this state, its counties, school districts, municipalities, political subdivisions, career centers, community colleges, or universities, may not discharge, reprimand, or in any other way penalize such member because of his or her absence by reason of state active duty. Employers are prohibited from discharging reemployed servicemembers, for a period of one year, except for cause. **(F.S. 250.482)**

56. Leave & Pay to State Employees for Military Service (NG, R)

All officials of the state, the several counties of the state, and the municipalities or political subdivisions of the state, including district school and community college officers, which officials are also servicemembers in the National Guard or a reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, shall be granted leave of absence from their respective offices and duties to perform active military service, the first 30 days of any such leave of absence to be with full pay. **(F.S. 115.09)** Additionally, after the first 30 days of full pay, public employers may supplement the military pay of its employees who are reservists in federal active duty in an amount necessary to bring their total salary, inclusive of their base military pay, to the level earned at the time they were called to active military duty. **(F.S. 115.14)**

57. Additional Leave for State Employees on National Guard Duty (NG)

Increases the amount of annual leave of absence granted to officers and employees of the state, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions of the state who are commissioned reserve officers or reserve enlisted personnel in the U.S. military or naval service or who are members of the National Guard from 17 days to 30 days. **(F.S. 115.07)**

58. Temporary Employment or Appointment of Officers

This law provides an exemption from basic law enforcement recruit training for an applicant who has served in the special operations forces of the U.S. military for at least five years, provided there is no more than a 4-year break from the applicant's special operations forces experience at the time of application. The Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission may require an exempt applicant to complete additional training as it deems appropriate, based on the applicant's prior training and experience. **(F.S. 943.10)**

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

59. In-State Tuition Rates

Certain military and family members receive in state tuition rates for Florida colleges and universities. As of July 1, 2019, the determination of resident status for tuition purposes is established at the time of acceptance (rather than enrollment) for the active duty member, their spouses, dependent children, and active drilling members of the Florida National Guard. **(F.S. 1009.21)**

60. Tuition Waivers

Requires state universities and community colleges to waive undergraduate tuition for a recipient of a Purple Heart or other combat decoration superior in precedence that fulfills specified criteria. **(F.S. 1009.26)**

61. Postsecondary Fee Waivers

The law authorizes Florida Colleges and Schools' institutions to waive any portion of specified fees that are not covered under the DOD Military Tuition Assistance (MTA) program including:

- Student activity and service fees;
- Financial aid fees;
- Technology fees;
- Capital improvement fees; and
- Any other authorized in s. 1009.23, F.S.

Active duty servicemembers using the DOD MTA program will no longer incur out of pocket costs when they are enrolled in a FCS institution that elects to implement the fee waiver. **(F.S. 1009.23)**

62. In-State Tuition Rates for Military Members Enrolled in Online Courses

The law creates an out-of-state fee waiver for an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces residing or stationed outside of the state at the time of enrollment at a state university, Florida College System institution, career center, or charter technical career center. This provision applies to online and distance education courses. **(F.S. 1009.26)**

63. College Credit for Military Training & Education Courses

Members of the United States Armed Forces can earn college credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military. **(F.S. 1004.096)**

Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel: The act requires the Board of Governors and State Board of Education to adopt a uniform set of rules to award academic credit for college degrees and technical training certification based on servicemembers' and veterans' prior military training and experience. The newly enacted legislation helps veterans and members on active duty to achieve their degrees quicker and without having to take unnecessary course requirements. **(F.S. 1004.096)**

64. Course Withdrawal for Military Service

Any student enrolled in a postsecondary course or courses at a career center, a Florida college System institution, or a state university shall be permitted the option of either completing the course or courses at a later date without penalty or withdrawing from the course or courses with a full refund of fees paid. If the student chooses to withdraw, the student's record shall reflect that the withdrawal is due to active military service. **(F.S. 1004.07)**

65. National Guard Educational Dollars for Duty Program (NG)

The Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) Program will be paid at 100 percent of the charged resident rate for Florida community colleges and public universities, and the average current state resident rate for private universities. EDD will pay for courses that matriculate toward a technical certificate, associates, baccalaureate, or master's degree and will pay for training in post-secondary institutions and technical centers to obtain industry certifications approved by the Department of Education. The Educational Dollars for Duty Program is for individuals who enter the Florida National Guard for the first time after June 30, 1997. Approval and payment of tuition is subject to annual appropriation. **(F.S. 250.10)**

FAMILY MEMBERS

66. Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3)

Florida is a member of the original states that signed on to the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) in 2006. The Florida Statute which reflects this membership is titled: Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The annual dues assessment for the Interstate Compact shall be paid within existing resources by the Department of Education. It is the purpose of this compact to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents by:

A. Facilitating the timely enrollment of children of military families and ensuring that they are not placed at a disadvantage due to difficulty in the transfer of education records from the previous school district or variations in entrance or age requirements.

B. Facilitating the student placement process through which children of military families are not disadvantaged by variations in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content, or assessment.

C. Facilitating the qualification and eligibility for enrollment, educational programs, and participation in extracurricular academic, athletic, and social activities.

D. Facilitating the on-time graduation of children of military families.

E. Providing for the adoption and enforcement of administrative rules implementing this compact.

F. Providing for the uniform collection and sharing of information between and among member states, schools, and military families under this compact.

G. Promoting coordination between this compact and other compacts affecting military children.

H. Promoting flexibility and cooperation between the educational system, parents, and the student in order to achieve educational success for the student.

(F.S. 1000.36)

67. Accommodation in Schools for the Transitioning Children of Military Families

Florida public schools must accept military permanent change of station (PCS) orders that relocate a military family to any military installation within the state as proof of residency for all public school authorized programs at the school. This allows registration of a student once orders are received rather than after the servicemember arrives and secures housing. This law also provides priority placement in gifted, special needs and voucher programs for the children of military members. Additionally, provides for smooth transition for children of military families coming into Florida by improving timely transfer of records, establishing procedures to lessen the impact of moves, providing services for transferring students, and giving them first preference in special academic programs. The Department of Education shall assist in the transition by promoting practices which foster access to extracurricular programs, establishing procedures to lessen the adverse impact of moves from the end of the junior year as well as before and during the senior year, encouraging or continuing partnerships between the military base and the school system, providing services for transitioning students when applying to and finding funding for postsecondary study, and providing other assistance as identified by department, school, and military personnel. Finally, dependent children of active-duty military personnel who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria for special academic programs offered through public schools shall be given first preference for admission to such programs even if the program is being offered through a public school other than the school to which the student would generally be assigned and the school at which the program is being offered has reached its maximum enrollment. **(F.S. 1003.05)**

Florida offers more virtual options for their students than any other state. Florida students at all grade levels have both full-time (virtual school) and part-time (virtual course) options. The options include virtual schools and courses offered by Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and by all 67 school districts. All of Florida's virtual education options are designated by law as school choice options for Florida students. Specifically:

- Virtual instruction programs and Florida Virtual School are educational choice options **(F.S 1002.20(6))**;
- Requires school boards to provide students with access to virtual instruction programs, including Florida Virtual School and other approved providers, and to award credit for successful completion of such courses **(F.S. 1001.42(23)**;
- School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through Florida Virtual School **(F.S. 1002.37(3)(c))**;
- Requires school districts to provide all enrolled public-school students within its boundaries the option of participating in part-time and full-time virtual instruction programs **(F.S. 1002.45(1)(b))**;

68. Exit Exam Graduation Requirements for High School Seniors of Military Families

In order to facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, states and local education agencies shall accept exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state, national norm-referenced tests, or alternative testing, in lieu testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state. **(F.S 1000.36, Article VII Section B)**

69. In-State College Tuition Rates for Military Family Members

This law amends the Congressman C.W. "Bill" Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program to allow additional persons to be eligible for the out-of-state tuition fee waivers. This addition allows individuals, such as a spouse or child of a veteran or servicemember using GI Bill benefits, to qualify for in-state tuition rate currently afforded to honorably discharged veterans residing in Florida and enrolled in a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district, or charter technical career center. The law requires a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district, or charter technical career center to waive out-of-state fees for any person who is receiving educational assistance through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and who physically resides in Florida while enrolled in the institution. **(F.S. 1009.26)**

70. Preferential Treatment for Military Children

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, a parent whose child is not subject to a current expulsion or suspension order may seek enrollment in and transport his or her child to any public school in the state, including a charter school, which has not reached capacity. The school district or charter school shall accept and report the student for purposes of funding through the FEFP. The school district or charter school may provide student transportation at their discretion. The bill requires the capacity determinations of each school district and charter school to be current and identified on their respective school website. In determining capacity, a district school board must incorporate specifications, plans, elements, and commitments contained in the district's educational facilities plan and required long-term work programs. Each charter school governing board must determine capacity based upon its charter contract. **Each school must provide preferential treatment in its controlled open enrollment process to dependent children of active duty military personnel who moved as a result of military orders.** **(F.S. 1002.31 (2) (c) 1)**

FAMILY SUPPORT

71. Support to Family Members Codified in Florida law

Florida extends Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) to include early termination of auto leases, cell phone agreements and other commonly leased or contracted items listed in this handbook. Florida Law incorporates, by reference, both the SCRA and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). The SCRA is a federal law which addresses many of the same issues as Florida Law. **(F.S. 250.82)** USERRA **(F.S. 115.15)** is the federal law which affords employment protections and rights to servicemembers.

72. Assistance for Dependents of Servicemembers on Active Duty

Provides that eligibility for the Family Readiness Program continues for a specified period following the termination of the servicemember's orders and his/her return home. **(F.S. 250.5206)**

73. Assistance for National Guard and Reserve Servicemembers on Active Duty (NG, R)

Provides need-based financial assistance to eligible servicemembers of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces, including the Coast Guard Reserves, who are on active duty serving in the global war on terrorism and who are federally deployed or participating in state operations for homeland defense, and eligible families of such servicemembers. Program funds may be used in emergency situations to purchase critically needed services, including, but not limited to, reasonable living expenses, housing, vehicles, equipment or renovations necessary to meet disability needs, and health care. Additionally, provides that eligibility for the Family Readiness Program continues for a specified period following the termination of the servicemember's orders and his/her return home. **(F.S. 250.5206)**

74. Soldier and Airman Assistance Program (NG)

Provides financial assistance and services to eligible servicemembers of the Florida National Guard and eligible members of their families. The program shall be administered by the Department of Military Affairs. The program provides assistance for housing, living expenses, vehicle repair and rental, and health care. **(F.S. 250.116)**

75. Eligibility for Public Benefits (SNAP, TANF)

Active duty military personnel, veterans and their spouses/minor children with qualified non-citizen status do not need to wait the standard five years after entering the country before they can receive public benefits. These benefits include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Medicaid. Other program rules including low income still apply.)
(Source: Florida Department of Children and Families)

76. Drivers Licenses

A member of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty in Florida shall not be required to obtain a Florida driver's license solely because he or she enters his or her children to be educated in the public schools of this state if he or she has a valid military driving permit or a valid driver's license issued by another state. **(F.S. 322.031)**

77. Persons with Disabilities – Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waivers

Provides individuals who meet eligibility requirements under F.S. 393.065 (1) to receive home and community-based services in Florida if parent or legal guardian is an active duty military servicemember and if, at the time of the transfer to Florida, the individual was already receiving home and community-based services in another state. Additional information can be found at: https://apd.myflorida.com **(SB2502A - Implementing Bill 00000002)**

78. Military and Veterans Assistance Program

The Military and Veterans Assistance Program ("MVAP") is an initiative within the Florida Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division that seeks to serve the unique needs of Florida's military servicemembers, reservists, and veterans. The program was established to help educate servicemembers and veterans on the types of scams that target their communities and to address concerns of military servicemembers and veterans across the state. Members of the MVAP team work directly with military servicemembers and veterans who have been targeted, or their representatives, in an effort to resolve their consumer protection-related issues or facilitate contact with other legal assistance if needed and as appropriate.

The MVAP team focuses on the following areas of assistance for military servicemembers and veterans across the state:

Outreach and Education: We collaborate with military and veteran leadership statewide to provide education and information regarding emerging scams targeting servicemembers, reservists, and veterans, and the ways in which our program can assist this community.

Complaint Resolution: A dedicated team works to address individual complaints by facilitating contact between the complaining servicemember, reservist, or veteran and the related business. Military servicemembers, reservists, dependents, base representatives, veterans, veteran services representatives, and state or federal agencies can file a complaint at www.myfloridalegal.com/MVAP.

- **Enforcement:** The MVAP team will monitor trends in complaints received and pursue consumer protection enforcement actions where appropriate.
- **Outside Referral:** For matters not within our consumer protection enforcement jurisdiction, our team will connect eligible servicemembers, reservists, and veterans with legal aid offices or other agencies if needed and as appropriate.
- **Improved Communication:** The MVAP team will work to encourage open communication between local, state, and federal partners to help ensure complaints are being handled by the correct organization and new and relevant information is shared.

Additional Resources View the Attorney General Ashley Moody's 2020 Military Consumer Protection Resource Guide at www.myfloridalegal.com.

Contact: Call 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226), e-mail MVAP@myfloridalegal.com or visit www.myfloridalegal.com/MVAP.

79. Governor DeSantis' GI LAW Initiative to Assist Florida's Military

The Governor's Initiative on Lawyers Assisting Warriors (GI LAW) draws from the talent of Florida's leading law firms to provide pro bono legal services for military members. This program allows our state's men and women in uniform to receive local council in a variety of civil matters, including actions in local courts.

Participating attorneys will dedicate time and expertise to ensure a prompt and fair resolution of legal matters. Those interested in obtaining pro bono legal services should go to the website at: www.enterpriseflorida.com/floridadefense/lawyers-assisting-warriors and fill out a Legal Assistance Request Form and submit it through their appropriate Judge Advocate General or civilian military attorney's office.

LAWYERSASSISTINGWARRIORS

GOVERNOR DESANTIS'
GI LAW INITIATIVE

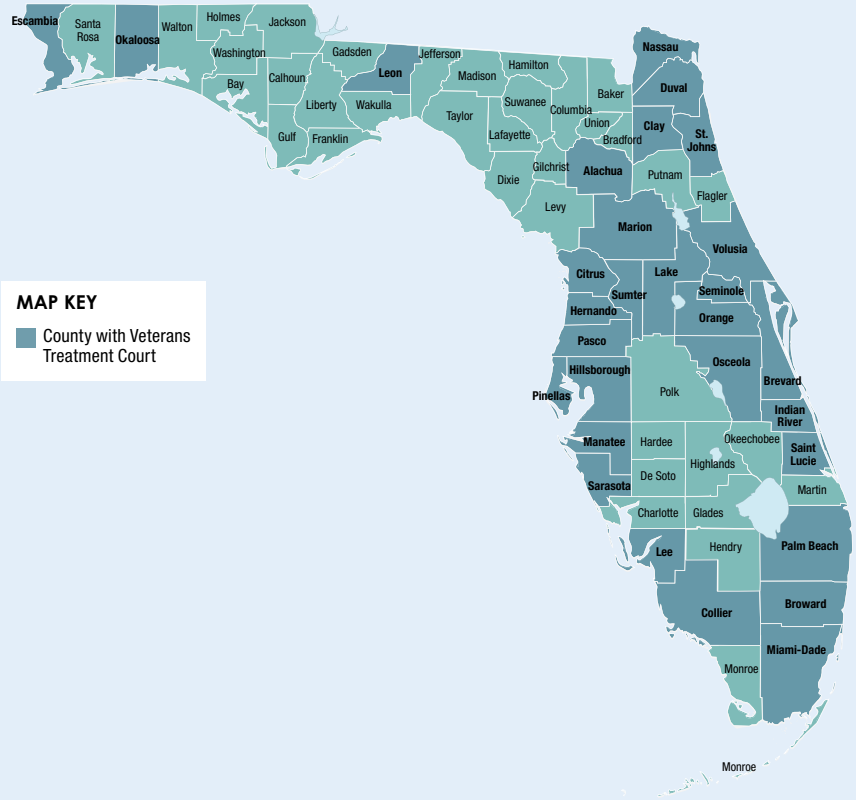
80. Deployed Parent Custody and Visitation

This law creates the "Uniform Deployed Parents Custody and Visitation Act" which complies with and mirrors federal law of the same name. This bill provides protections for deployed servicemembers in regard to custody of children. It requires parents to communicate about custody and visitation issues as soon as possible after a servicemember learns of deployment and establishes procedures for parents who agree to a custody arrangement during deployment to resolve these issues by an out-of-court agreement. Further, it allows a deployed parent to grant care-taking authority to a non-parent with whom the child has a close positive relationship of substantial duration and depth. In the absence of an agreement, the bill allows for expedited resolution of a custody arrangement in court with a temporary custody order. The bill prohibits the entry of a permanent custody order before or during deployment without the servicemember's consent. The bill provides for termination of the temporary custody arrangement following the servicemember's return from deployment. The bill also repeals the section of law that currently addresses temporary time-sharing modification and child support modification due to military service. A 2020 amendment to the law added the provision that the absence of a servicemember due to a deployment or anticipated deployment may not be considered as abandonment or used as a factor in making such a determination. **(F.S. 61.703-61.773)**

81. Veterans Treatment Courts

The **T. Patt Maney Veterans' Treatment Act** authorizes a veterans court with the purpose of addressing the substance abuse and mental health needs of veterans – including active duty servicemembers – within the criminal justice system. Veterans court, modeled after drug court, serves justice-involved veterans with a military-related substance use and/or mental health disorder including traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Veterans court requires the participant to appear regularly before the court, attend mandatory treatment sessions, and submit to frequent testing for substance use. More information on Veterans courts can be found in the Veterans Resource Guide at www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/266/urlt/VETERANS_RESOURCE_GUIDE.pdf **(F.S. 394.47891)**

As of June 2020, Florida has 31 veterans courts in operation.



FLORIDA DEFENSE ALLIANCE

VISION

The state of Florida provides the most innovative and comprehensive military, defense and national security support in the Nation.

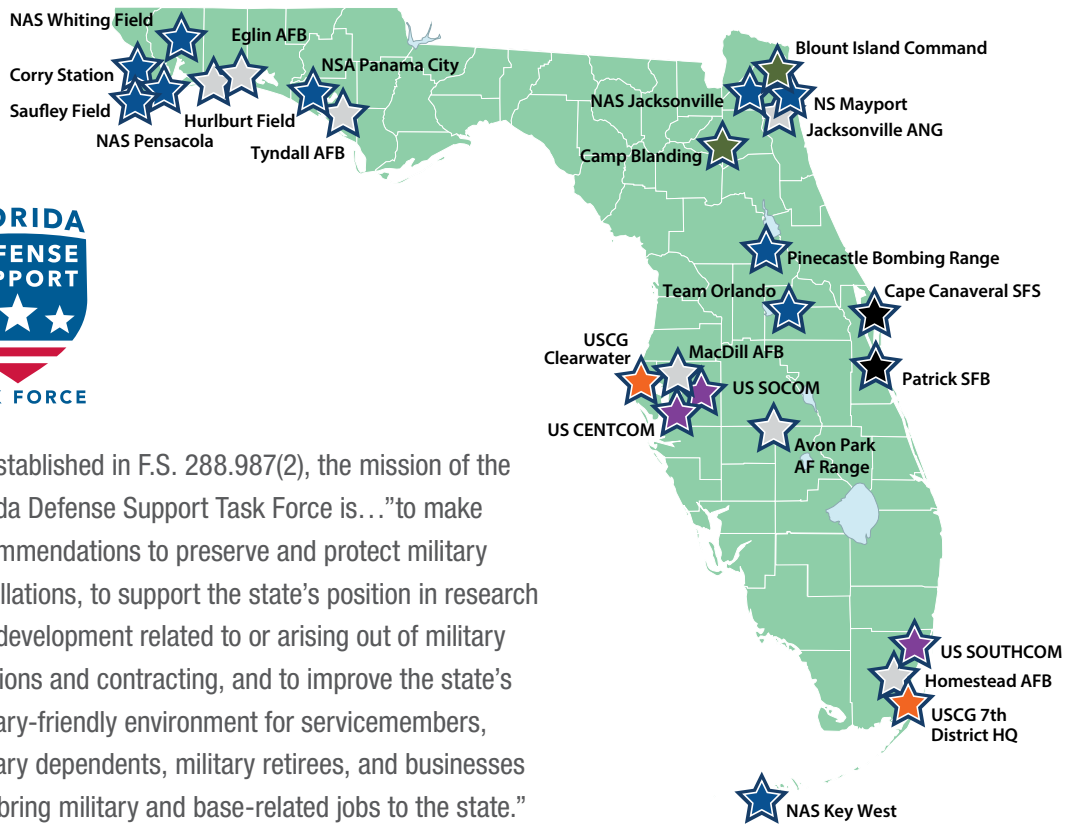
enterpriseflorida.com/floridadefense

PURPOSE

Per F.S. 288.980(1)(b), the Florida Defense Alliance (FDA), an organization within Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI), is designated as the organization to ensure that Florida, its resident military bases and missions, and its military host communities are in competitive positions as the United States continues its defense realignment, and base structure adjustments, as well as efforts with the defense industrial base. The defense alliance shall serve as an overall advisory body for defense-related activities of EFI. The FDA may receive funding from appropriations made for that purpose administered by the department.

FLORIDA DEFENSE ALLIANCE MISSION

The FDA identifies and coordinates the plans, engagement and public awareness necessary to provide statewide leadership and support to defense related people, installations and missions throughout Florida.



FLORIDA DEFENSE SUPPORT TASK FORCE

As established in F.S. 288.987(2), the mission of the Florida Defense Support Task Force is…"to make recommendations to preserve and protect military installations, to support the state's position in research and development related to or arising out of military missions and contracting, and to improve the state's military-friendly environment for servicemembers, military dependents, military retirees, and businesses that bring military and base-related jobs to the state."

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing) launched the Salute Our Soldiers Military Loan Program in 2020 to assist Florida's growing population of veteran and active-duty military personnel in obtaining permanent housing. The Salute Our Soldiers program offers a variety of down payment and closing cost assistance (DPA), coupled with low interest rate first mortgage loans. Some of the DPA products offered are even forgivable after five years.

Florida Housing launched this veteran-focused initiative on March 2, with up to $8 million in funds available to assist military members throughout the state. Veterans who have participated in this program have purchased a home with low-interest rates in just a few short weeks. To date, more than 250 individuals have utilized the Salute Our Soldiers program to obtain a permanent home, and it is expected that by the program's end, these funds will have assisted more than 1,000 military families.

Florida Housing's Salute Our Soldiers team is proud to offer an easy and positive home buying experience with quick mortgage assistance and various lending options for all veterans across Florida's 67 counties.

For more information on Florida Housing and the Salute Our Soldiers Military Loan Program, please visit:
https://www.floridahousing.org/programs/homebuyer-loan-program-wizards/salute-our-soldiers-military-loan-program

TRANSITIONING MILITARY FAMILIES ACCESS TO FL VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Florida offers more virtual options for their students than any other state. Florida students at all grade levels have both full-time (virtual school) and part-time (virtual course) options. The options include virtual schools and courses offered by Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and by all 67 school districts. All of Florida's virtual education options are designated by law as school choice options for Florida students. Specifically:

- Section 1002.20(6), Florida Statutes (F.S.), related to educational choice, lists virtual instruction programs and Florida Virtual School as educational choice options.
- Section 1001.42(23), F.S., related to virtual instruction, requires school boards to provide students with access to virtual instruction programs, including Florida Virtual School and other approved providers, and to award credit for successful completion of such courses.
- Section 1002.37(3)(c), F.S., states that school districts may not limit student access to courses offered through Florida Virtual School.
- Section 1002.45(1)(b), F.S., requires school districts to provide all enrolled public school students within its boundaries the option of participating in part-time and full-time virtual instruction programs.

Please note, however, students enrolled in the district are subject to district policies relating to student progression. While a district may not artificially limit a student's enrollment in FLVS courses if the student would be academically eligible to enroll in the same courses in a brick-and-mortar setting within the district, a district still has authority and responsibility to provide academic guidance to their students. This includes limiting enrollment in courses for which the student is not academically qualified, in the same manner it would limit a student from enrolling in brick-and-mortar courses for which the student was not academically qualified.

For further information related to FLVS as a school choice option, please contact Sandy Eggers at: 850-245-9536 • Sandra.Eggers@fldoe.org • visit: **http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/virtual-edu/**