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FLORIDA DEFENSE ALLIANCE

Florida Defense Support Task Force

2015 FLORIDA MILITARY-FRIENDLY GUIDE

A Summary of Sunshine State Laws, Programs and Benefits for Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Service Members and Families

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GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome

Welcome to Florida!

On behalf of all Floridians, I welcome you to the Sunshine State and thank you for your military service. As you perform your military duties, Florida wants to support you and your family during your service. I deeply appreciate your commitment and dedication to the United States and the defense of freedom. Florida is especially committed to assisting military families in any way possible as our uniformed military members go in harm's way to protect our nation.

The *Florida Military-Friendly Guide* is intended to help you understand the many programs and benefits that the state of Florida has implemented to support and assist military members and their families. This guide compiled by the Florida Defense Support Task Force contains a summary of various advantages military service members and their families enjoy while being stationed and living in Florida.

I will continue to work hard to maintain Florida's reputation as the most military-friendly state in the Nation.

Finally, I cannot adequately express our gratitude for all you do for our national defense, but hope you understand how grateful we are for your service, dedication, and patriotism.

Rick Scott
Governor

STATE OF FLORIDA

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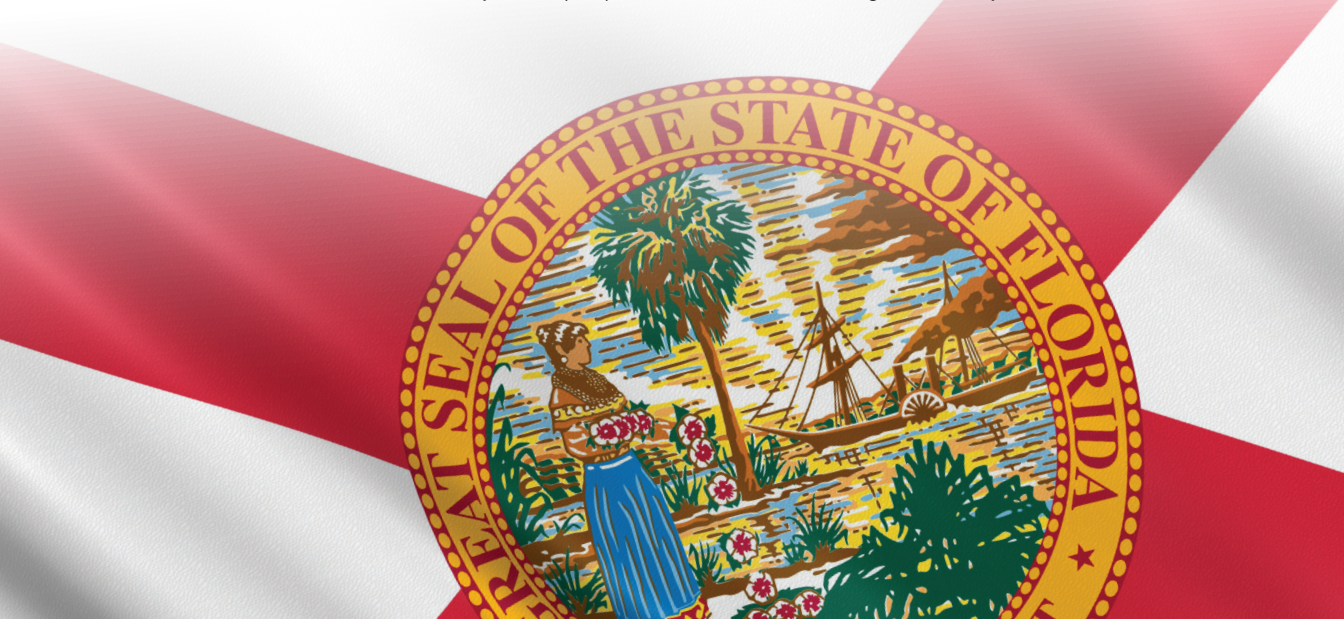
NOTE: Statutes, benefits and programs apply to all categories: active duty, National Guard and Reserve unless designated/restricted to only components shown in parentheses.

NG = National Guard R = Reserve

Shaded items are new or changed for 2015.

Point of Contact: **Bruce Grant**
Executive Director, Florida Defense Support Task Force
Telephone: (850) 878-0826 • Email: bgrant@enterpriseflorida.com



PROTECTIONS

1. Protection Against Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices

Provides military service members 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 service member 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 increased 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

Service members 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 service member to Terminate a Lease.**
  Service members may terminate their leases within the purview of the statute when the service member:
  - 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

Service members 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 service member moves, either permanently or on temporary duty for over 60 days, outside the area which the service provider provides telecommunications service; 2) The service member is discharged or released from duty and either returns to an area not serviced by the telecommunications service provider or the service member's home of record does is not so serviced by the provider; and/or 3) The service members orders require a move outside the continental United States. Upon such termination the service member 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

Service members may terminate motor vehicle leases by providing 30 days written notice to the lessor if either the service member is required to move outside the continental United States; or the service member receives orders for a period exceeding 60 days for duty outside the continental United States or for a temporary change of station. The service member 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 service member and the lessor under any circumstances. **(FS. 520.14)**

7. Protection for Termination of Mobile Home and Vehicle Registration

Any service member, 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 service member was serving on active duty or state active duty 35 miles or more from the mobile home. The service member must present to the department either a copy of the official military orders or a written verification signed by the service member'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% of the unearned premium if an insured service member 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

Service members and dependents are not required to pay 2 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 and 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

Service members may terminate agreements to purchase realty prior to closing if any of the following occur: 1) The service member has a permanent change of station which is 35 or more miles from the location of the property; 2) The service member is released from Active Duty and the property is more than 35 miles from the service member's home of record; 3) The service member receives orders requiring him or her to move into government quarters or does, in fact, move into government quarters; or 4) The service member 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 service member. Further, no other fees may be assessed against the service member. These protections cannot be waived or modified. **(F.S. 689.27)**

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

Service members 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 Service Members

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)**

LICENSES, REGISTRATIONS, & FEES

17. Concealed Weapons or Firearms Licenses

Current service members 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 service members 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, service members with concealed weapon or firearm licenses who are serving on military orders away from their residence are granted an extension of the normal expiration date of their licenses. In such circumstances, a service member's license will not expire for 180 days after the date upon which the service member returns from serving on military orders. **(F.S. 790.06)**

18. 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% 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)

19. 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)

20. Specialty Motor Vehicle License Plates

Ex-Prisoner of War, Medal of Honor, Pearl Harbor Survivor, US 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, and Operation Desert Storm Veteran **(F.S. 320.08058)**

21. 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)**

22. Military Gold Sportsman 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. 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 have lived in the state for six months and 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)**

23. Operation Outdoor Freedom for Wounded Warriors

Operation Outdoor Freedom is an endeavor of the Florida Forest Service that provides recreational opportunities to wounded veterans. Designated state and agricultural lands throughout Florida grant these veterans unique opportunities for recreation and rehabilitation. Participants must have a service-connected disability incurred while serving during wartime as defined in s. 1.01(14) or peacetime defined in s.296.02.
(Reference: Florida Forest Service, Policy and Procedure Manual)

24. 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)**

25. 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)**

26. Motor Vehicle Driver's License Extensions

Service members 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. **(F.S. 322.121)**

27. 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)

28. 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 Certificatin of Waiver, military members may be exempt from passing skills test required for a CDL.
(Reference: Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles)

29. 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. 472.016)**

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.)**

30. Fishing and Hunting Events

Recreational fishing and hunting license 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))**

31. 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 years 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)**

32. 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)**

33. 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)**

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

Exempts an active service member, 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)**

LICENSURE

35. 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 6 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)**

36. Engineer Licensure/Exam

Allows applicants for professional engineering examination 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)**

37. Health Professional Licensure

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)**

Additionally, 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 spouses' duties with the Armed Forces. **(F.S. 456.024) (F.S. 401.271) (F.S. 468.309)**

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)**

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. **(F.S. 456.024)**

38. Temporary Certificates for Active Duty Military Personnel Practicing in Areas of Critical Need

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)**

39. Nursing Licensure

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)**

40. Medical Licensure

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)**

41. 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): www.fdle.state.fl.us/Content/CJST/Menu/Officer-Requirements-Main-Page/Equivalency.aspx.

42. 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 contact Chief Bill Wendlandt at bill.wendlandt@myfloridacfo.com **(Reference: Office of the Chief Financial Officer)**

TAX AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS

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

Authorizes veterans and service members 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 service members are sufficient to maintain permanent residence status of service member and spouse for purposes of such determination by property appraiser. **(F.S. 196.173)**

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION/ ASSISTANCE

44. 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 members' change of station orders or deployment to become eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. **(F.S. 443.101)**

45. CareerSource Florida — Employment and 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)**

46. National Guard Members Employment Protection (NG)

National Guard Service members are protected and will not to be penalized by employers and postsecondary institution 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 service members, for a period of one year, except for cause. **(F.S. 250.482)**

47. Leave and 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 service members 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)**

48. 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)**

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

SERVICE MEMBERS

49. In-State Tuition Rates

Certain military and family members receive in state tuition rates. **(F.S. 1009.21)**

50. 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)**

51. College Credit for Military Training and 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)**

52. 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)**

53. Special Category 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)**

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

The Educational Dollars for Duty (EDD) Program will be paid at 100% 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.

55. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Florida is a member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The annual dues assessment for the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children 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)

56. Accommodation in Schools for the Transition for Children of Military Families

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)**

57. 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)

58. Florida Participates in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

The purpose of the compact is 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)

59. 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 service member using GI Bill benefits, to qualify for in-state tuition rates 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)**

FAMILY SUPPORT

60. Support to Family Members Codified in Florida law

Florida extends Service members 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 Service members Civil Relief Act (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 service members.

61. Assistance for Dependents of Service Members on Active Duty

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

62. Assistance for National Guard and Reserve Service Members on Active Duty (NG, R)

Provides need-based financial assistance to eligible service members 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 service members. 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 service member's orders and his/her return home. **(F.S. 250.5206)**

63. Soldier and Airman Assistance Program (NG)

Provides financial assistance and services to eligible service members 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)**

64. 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)

65. Child Custody

Provides that a parent's activation, deployment, or temporary assignment to military service and resultant temporary disruption to the child may not be the sole factor in granting petition for or modification of permanent time-sharing and parental responsibility. Additionally, provides for deployed military service men and women to designate a family member or stepparent to exercise their visitation rights while the service member is deployed. **(F.S. 61.13002)**

66. 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)**

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

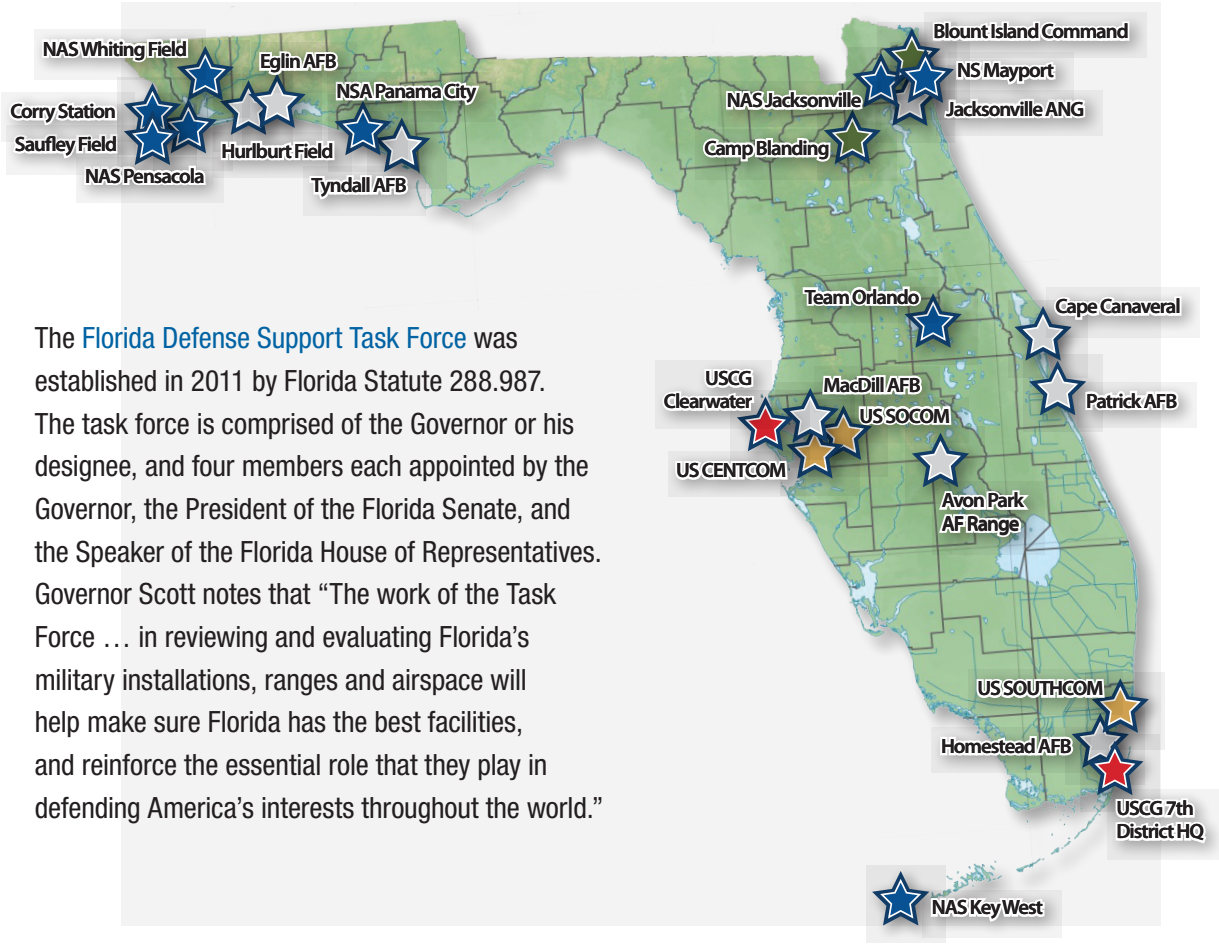
For FY 2015/2016, provides individuals who meet eligibility requirements under F.S. 393.065 (1) to receive home and community-based services in Florida if parent or legal guardian is an active duty military service member and if, at the time of the transfer to Florida, the individual was already receiving home and community-based services in another state. Additional information can be found at: http://apdcares.org/
(SB2502A – Implementing Bill 00000002)

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 service members – 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 http://www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/266/urlt/VETERANS_RESOURCE_GUIDE.pdf **(F.S. 394.47891)**

PARTNERSHIPS



The Florida Defense Support Task Force was established in 2011 by Florida Statute 288.987. The task force is comprised of the Governor or his designee, and four members each appointed by the Governor, the President of the Florida Senate, and the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives. Governor Scott notes that "The work of the Task Force … in reviewing and evaluating Florida's military installations, ranges and airspace will help make sure Florida has the best facilities, and reinforce the essential role that they play in defending America's interests throughout the world."

FLORIDA DEFENSE SUPPORT TASK FORCE MISSION:

- 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.
- To improve the state's military friendly environment for service members, military dependents, military retirees and businesses that bring military and base-related jobs to the state.

"Our goal is to maintain Florida as the most military friendly state in the nation."

Governor Rick Scott

FLORIDA'S MILITARY ADVANTAGES

Florida Governor Rick Scott is committed to maintaining Florida as the most military friendly state in the nation. Florida already offers:

- **No state income tax, low corporate tax rates, and a favorable business tax climate**
- **Support for military spouses – including employment, professional certifications/ licensing assistance and fee waivers, and more**
- **Proof of military service on driver's license – to support community and business efforts such as veteran discounts**
- **In-state college tuition rates for military family members**
- **An extensive veterans health care network – including seven state veterans nursing homes; seven federal Veterans Medical Centers, one specializing in traumatic brain injuries; and special programs for veterans with substance abuse and mental health issues**
- **Veterans education benefits – including in-state university tuition for all veterans, free undergraduate state university tuition for Purple Heart recipients, a troops to teachers program, early college registration, and college credit for military training**

FREE DOWNLOAD

This guide can be downloaded from the Florida Defense Support Task Force website:

www.enterpriseflorida.com/fdstf

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