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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



www.FloridaVets.org

May 2011

Veterans Bills Heading to Governor for Signature

TALLAHASSEE – A number of veteran-related bills are heading to the governor’s desk for signature, following the May 7 end of the 2011 Florida legislative session.

A bill creating a Florida Veterans Hall of Fame to be placed in the state Capitol (*House Bill 465, Senate Bill 520*) was passed unanimously and legislation providing expanded property tax relief for certain combat-wounded veterans 65 years of age and over (*HB 439, SB 592*) will be sent to the voters as an amendment on the 2012 ballot.

Gold Star parents will be honored with free lifetime entrance to Florida’s 160 State Parks (*HB 95, SB 236*).

Purple Heart recipients will have better access to state college tuition fee waivers through use of alternate documentation (*SB 2150*) and special recreational areas will be established in state forests for service-disabled veterans (*HB 663, SB 850*).

Other bills on their way to the governor for signature include the following:

Driver’s Licenses and Identification Cards:

Provides for a person’s status as veteran to be indicated on his or

her driver license or identification upon payment of an additional fee and presentation of a person’s DD Form 214 military discharge document. (*HB 1165, SB 1190*)

Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Deployed Servicemembers: Provides for servicemembers who receive homestead exemption and who are deployed in military operations to receive an additional ad valorem tax exemption. (*HB 1141, SB 1502*)

Certificates and Licenses for Certain Health Care Practitioners: Provides for the issuance of a temporary license to specified health care practitioners who are spouses of active duty members of the Armed Forces under certain circumstances. The legislation also names the temporary certificates issued to physicians who practice in areas of critical need after the late Rear Adm. LeRoy Collins Jr., former executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. (*HB 1319, SB 1228*)

Violations of the Florida Election Code: Provides that it is violation of Florida Election Code for a candidate to falsely represent military service, and requires assessment

of a civil penalty for any candidate found to have misrepresented military service. (*HB 553, SB 330*)

Child Custody: Provides that a parent’s activation, deployment or temporary assignment to military service and resultant temporary disruption to a child may not be the sole factor in granting petition for or modification of permanent time-sharing and parental responsibility. (*HB 621, SB 1650*)

Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot: Authorizes absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters to use the federal write-in absentee ballot to vote in any federal and certain state or local elections. (*HB 227, SB 378*)

“Not all bills made it out of the session,” said Jim Brodie, FDVA director of Cabinet and Legislative Affairs. “The establishment of Veteran Treatment Courts, placement of Operation New Dawn in Florida Statutes and designating Aug. 7 of each year as Purple Heart Day regrettably did not pass, but may be reconsidered next session.”

Interested parties can check on the final status of all veteran-related bills by visiting the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org and accessing the section entitled *Legislative Issues*.

News of the Month

- Veteran Bills for Signing
- Memorial Day Events
- Memorial Day Resolution
- Service Officer Training
- House Honors Collins
- Governor Visits FNG
- VA Supports Caregivers
- PTSD App Helps Vets

Conferences and Events

References for Veterans

Florida Observes Memorial Day

TALLAHASSEE -- Memorial Day observances are scheduled throughout the state on May 30.

Consult your local media for times and locations. *See page 2 for this year’s resolution.*



Meredith McMackin, Gold Star Mother and advisor to the Florida State University Collegiate Veterans Association, addresses Gov. Rick Scott and the Cabinet May 17 at the Capitol in Tallahassee. McMackin accepted the 2011 State of Florida Memorial Day Resolution on behalf of all Floridians who made the ultimate sacrifice. *Photo by Melanie Hutchinson.*

Florida's Memorial Day Resolution

Courtesy of Gov. Rick Scott, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, and Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam

WHEREAS, the last Monday in May is set aside to mourn those who gave their lives in service to our Nation; and

WHEREAS, our service men and women answered the call of duty and made the ultimate sacrifice to maintain the security of our country and the liberties we hold so dear; and

WHEREAS, our Nation is honor-bound to remember those who died on distant shores defending our Nation and our way of life; and

WHEREAS, millions of Floridians wore the uniforms of the Armed Forces of the United States during the past century with tens of thousands giving their lives while serving; and

WHEREAS, more than 1.6 million veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States currently reside in Florida; and

WHEREAS, Florida's Veteran Service Organizations continue to foster the tradition of honoring and remembering the Nation's war dead; and

WHEREAS, on Memorial Day, as throughout the year, we pray for the families of the fallen and show our respect for the contributions these service members made to the perpetuation of American freedom; and

WHEREAS, our grateful Nation honors their selfless service, and we acknowledge a debt of honor beyond our capability to repay; and

WHEREAS, it is important for us as a community, state and country to show our gratitude for all our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Merchant Mariners who died in the service of our Nation that we might continue to enjoy the liberties we so deeply cherish.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida do hereby recognize May 30, 2011, as MEMORIAL DAY and encourage all Floridians to learn about the history of Memorial Day and call upon local communities to conduct appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs to demonstrate support and recognize the contribution of our fallen warriors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Governor and Cabinet ask all Floridians to pause for one minute and observe the National Moment of Remembrance to honor America's fallen at 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day and urge the media to participate in these observances.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the State of Florida to be hereunto affixed in the City of Tallahassee this 17th day of May, 2011.

Back to Table of Contents

Veteran Service Officers Expand Outreach Following Annual Training

COCOA BEACH, Fla. --

More than 115 veteran service officers from among Florida's 67 counties met here May 2-5 for annual accreditation training.

Attendees at the conference, hosted by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and County Veterans Service Officers Association, received updates on state and federal legislation and benefits affecting veterans and their families.

"The conference provides veteran service officers an opportunity to meet face-to-face with important VA officials and receive policy updates which directly affect the way we do business," said CVSOA President Fred Harrop. "The conference also provides opportunities for outside groups to inform service officers as to their ability to assist veterans and their families with resources that are not available at the county level due to budget constraints."

Services provided to veterans and their families by county veteran service officers are free of charge.

"This year's training session was a tremendous success, with a larger than anticipated turnout," said Alene Tarter, FDVA's director of Benefits and Assistance. "The continuing education and coordination between federal, state and county veteran advocates helps ensure veterans and their families receive all of the benefits due them.

A listing of Florida county veteran service offices can be found at www.FloridaVets.org.

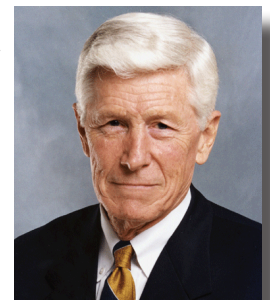


Legislator Honors Former FDVA Executive Director During Session

TALLAHASSEE -- The late LeRoy Collins Jr., former executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, was honored with a moment of silence on the floor of the House of Representatives during the final day of the 2011 Florida legislative session.

The tribute, sponsored by Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, followed comments reflecting the retired Rear Admiral's service to the nation and Florida.

Collins, son of Florida's governor from 1955-1961, died July 29, 2010.



LeRoy Collins Jr.

Veteran Organization Conventions, Events and Job Fairs

Sponsor	Event	Date	Location	Contact Information
Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Florida	State Convention	June 8-12	Best Western Waterfront Hotel, Punta Gorda	(321) 622-4330 www.floridapurpleheart.org
AMVETS, Department of Florida	State Convention	June 9-12	Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando	(813) 626-3406
RecruitMilitary	Jacksonville Veteran Opportunity Expo	June 16 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.	EverBank Field, Jacksonville	(513) 683-5020 www.RecruitMilitary.com
Disabled American Veterans, Department of Florida	83rd Annual State Convention	June 16-18	Orlando Marriott Lake Mary, Lake Mary	(352) 331-0945
Special Forces Association	2011 Special Forces Association National Convention	June 22-27	Orlando World Center Marriott, Orlando	(772) 834-3321 (561) 252-6080
VFW, Department of Florida	81st Annual State Convention	June 23-26	Daytona Beach Hilton Resort, Daytona Beach	(352) 622-5126
American Legion, Department of Florida	2011 Department Convention	June 23-26	Caribe Royale, Orlando	(407) 295-2631, Ext. 232
Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association of Florida	Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association National Reunion	July 5-10	Orlando Hilton, Orlando	(888) 488-3509 www.vhpa.org

Editor's Note: All times local. Florida's Veterans Service Organizations and veteran-related agencies provided the information in the table above. To submit event information, contact the editor at MurrayR@fdva.state.fl.us



Gov. Rick Scott prepares to rappel down an air assault tower at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, May 12. The governor visited several Florida National Guard facilities to meet with Guardsmen and learn more about the mission of the Florida National Guard. *Photo by Sgt. Karen Kozub, 107th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment.*

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

VA Processing Applications for New Family Caregiver Benefits

Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON -- In the first week for open applications, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has assisted more than 625 veterans, service members and their family caregivers in applying for new services under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act 2010.

New services for primary family caregivers of eligible post-9/11 veterans include a stipend, mental health services and access to health care insurance, if they are not already entitled to care or services under a health plan.

The stipend portion of this service will be backdated to the date of the application.

Comprehensive caregiver training and medical support are other key components of this program.

Applications can be processed by telephone through the Caregiver Support Line at (855) 260-3274, in person at a VA Medical Center with a Caregiver Support Coordinator, by mail or online at www.caregiver.va.gov with the new Caregiver Application (VA Form 1010-CG).

The website application also features a chat option that provides the family caregiver with a live representative to assist in completing the application form.

References for Veterans

2011 Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide

www.FloridaVets.org -- then click on "Benefits Guide"

Federal Benefits for Veterans & Dependents Guide

http://www1.va.gov/OPA/publications/benefits_book.asp

Florida Veterans Foundation

www.FloridaVeteransFoundation.org

Employ Florida Vets - veteran employment resources

<http://veterans.employflorida.com/portals/veteran/>

Florida's Veteran Service Organizations

www.floridavets.org/organization/commanders.asp

Florida Department of Military Affairs

<http://dma.myflorida.com/>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

www.va.gov

Burial, Headstone and Marker Information (VA)

www.cem.va.gov

Returning OEF/OIF/OND Veterans (VA)

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

National Resource Directory - for wounded warriors

<http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>

Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and Veteran Education Benefits

www.gibill.va.gov

National VA Homeless Hotline - 24 Hour

Toll Free at 1-877-424-3838

Veterans Crisis Line - 24 Hour

Toll Free at 1-800-273-8255, Press 1

www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Social Security Administration

www.socialsecurity.gov

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

www.esgr.mil

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

www.osd.dms.state.fl.us

Center for Women Veterans

<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>

New Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder App Helps Thousands

Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources.

The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA's National Center for PTSD website: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Florida's Veterans' Homes

Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home

(Columbia County) *Lake City* (386) 758-0600

Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Volusia County) *Daytona Beach* (386) 274-3460

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Pasco County) *Land O' Lakes* (813) 558-5000

Alexander Nininger State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Broward County) *Pembroke Pines* (954) 985-4824

Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Bay County) *Springfield* (850) 747-5401

Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Charlotte County) *Port Charlotte* (941) 613-0919

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home

(St. Johns County) *St. Augustine* (904) 940-2193

Supporting Veterans' Homes

Your purchase of the *Florida Salutes Veterans* or one of the approved Army, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard license plates directly helps veterans.



The \$15 surcharge goes into a trust fund for the operation and maintenance of Florida's veterans' homes.

A portion of the Marine Corps and *Support Our Troops* license plates also supports the State Veterans' Homes Program.

Anyone can purchase these plates.

You may also support the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund by making a \$1 contribution when renewing your Florida Driver License.



FDVA on Facebook

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is on *Facebook*, the social network service and website. FDVA seeks to connect veterans and their families with unclaimed benefits.

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