



For Immediate Release

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Governor Scott: It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget Supports Florida Veterans

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Governor Rick Scott today highlighted investments in the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget that support Florida veterans and their families.

Governor Scott said, "The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget invests in critical programs and priorities important for Florida's veterans and their families. As the nation's most military and veteran-friendly state, it's important to support those who fought for our freedoms."

Florida will become the first state in the nation to guarantee continuation of home and community based services for individuals with developmental disabilities with active-duty military caregivers who have moved from another state.

The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget supports Governor Scott's commitment to helping Florida's veteran community with these investments:

- **Veterans' Nursing Home:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget dedicates \$11 million for initial design and construction funds of a seventh State Veterans' Nursing Home to help meet growing demand. The location of the new home will be determined through a competitive evaluation process overseen by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- **Job Training for Veterans:**
 - The newly created *Florida is for Veterans, Inc.* will receive \$3 million for Veterans Education and Training and Services Grants. These training programs will help veterans as they search for expanding job opportunities.
 - A pilot program by the National Cyber Partnership to train veterans in cyber security will receive \$750,000.
- **Outreach to Veterans:** *VISIT Florida* will receive \$1 million to market Florida as a permanent home for veterans and to help improve knowledge of and access to earned benefits and services.

- **Supporting Student Veterans:** The Honorably Discharged Graduate Assistance Program will receive \$1 million to provide supplemental needs-based educational benefits to honorably discharged student veterans during holiday and semester breaks when their Post-9/11 GI Bill payments stop.
- **Veterans' Courts:** Veterans' Courts in Okaloosa, Pasco, Pinellas, Clay, Duval and Orange Counties will receive \$1 million.
- **Mental Health Services for Veterans:** The Budget invests \$150,000 for a program to expand mental health services for veterans in the Tampa Bay region.
- **Employment Assistance for Veterans:** The Budget dedicates \$409,000 for a pilot program to provide employment assistance to veterans in Manatee, Sarasota, Hardee and DeSoto counties.
- **Building Homes for Heroes:** The Budget provides \$2 million to build 20-25 homes in Florida for veterans who served in the armed forces and were injured during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **Assistance for Homeless Veterans:** The Transition House Homeless Veterans Program in Osceola County receives \$250,000 in the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget.
- **Special Forces Facility:** The It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget invests \$2.5 million for construction of a 10,000 square foot facility to support operations of the 3/20th Special Forces Unit located on Camp Blanding, Florida.
- **Armory Maintenance & Operations:** The Budget provides an increase of \$1.7 million to cover the maintenance, and repair of armories across the state.

In addition, Governor Scott signed the Florida GI Bill (HB 7015) that included the following:

- **Armory Renovation Program:** The Florida GI Bill invests \$12.5 million for continuing renovations to state National Guard facilities to meet state and federal building codes, increase energy efficiency, and improve the Florida National Guard's ability to retain units.
- **Educational Dollars for Duty:** Through a combination of funding contained in the It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget and the Florida GI Bill, \$4.6 million is provided to support members of the Florida National Guard by assisting them with tuition assistance and book fees so they can continue their education. The legislation also allows out-of-state student veterans to receive in-state tuition rates through the *Congressman C.W. Bill Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program*.

- **Florida's Military Presence and Families:** The Florida GI Bill provides \$7.5 million to the Department of Environmental Protection to acquire non-conservation lands to buffer and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses around military installations for the purpose of securing and protecting these installations.

Retired Army Colonel Mike Prendergast, executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs said, "As a Navy veteran and proud military advocate, the Governor's commitment to honor Florida's more than 1.5 million veterans is truly appreciated. His It's Your Money Tax Cut Budget strengthens our state's ability to connect veterans of all ages with earned services, benefits and support."

Washington Sanchez, chairman and CEO of the Florida Veterans Foundation said, "Florida's veteran community will be well served by Governor Scott's budget funding for veterans. The governor continues to place high priority on improving the quality of life for our state's veterans and their families by pouring support into current and new initiatives that capitalize on new opportunities and further contribute to a healthy Florida economy."

Jim Conner, president of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Florida Council of Chapters said, "We are excited at the funding in the Governor's budget that will complement and add to the programs that assist veterans and their families. The expansion will positively impact veterans directly through robust benefits and services including an emphasis on employment outreach and marketing to help promote and connect veterans with employers in the employment marketplace."

Will Seccombe, President and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA said, "VISIT FLORIDA looks forward to working closely with Florida Is For Veterans, Inc. to help market the Sunshine State as the best destination for veterans to live, work and play."

Paul Martel, chairman of the Florida Veterans Council said, "We are very pleased about the funding to veterans in the new budget, especially where it helps support the construction for a seventh state veterans' nursing home. With Florida home to the third largest veteran's population with a large number of them from World War II and Korean War eras, a new home will help fill the increasing need for compassionate care to Florida's older adult veteran demographic."

Ray A. Quinn, Sergeant Major (USA, Ret), Vice Chairman of the St. Johns County Veterans Council, said, "Having served Florida and the nation for more than forty years, I find the actions of the Governor and the 2014 Florida Legislature overwhelming. Florida's heroes are so worthy and I know they will be so very grateful. My thanks to Governor Scott and our Florida Legislature."

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