

House Bill No. 691

An act relating to military personnel on duty; creating the Citizen Soldier Matching Grant Program within the Agency for Workforce Innovation; providing for matching grants to be awarded to private sector employers that provide wages to employees serving in the United States Armed Forces Reserves or the Florida National Guard while those employees are on federal active duty; providing eligibility requirements for grant recipients; directing the Agency for Workforce Innovation to develop a plan to administer the application and payment procedures for the matching grants; providing for the award of matching grants after approval of the plan; providing an appropriation; providing 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; providing a 90-day extension period for such licenses after return from federal active duty; providing requirements with respect to such extension; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Citizen Soldier Matching Grant Program.—The Agency for Workforce Innovation shall establish a matching grant program to award matching grants to private sector employers in this state that provide wages to employees serving in the United States Armed Forces Reserves or the Florida National Guard while those employees are on federal active duty. A grant may not be provided for federal active duty served before January 1, 2005. Each grant shall be awarded to reimburse the employer for not more than one-half of the monthly wages paid to an employee who is a resident of this state for the actual period of federal active duty. The monthly grant per employee may not exceed one-half of the difference between the amount of monthly wages paid by the employer to the employee at the level paid before the date the employee was called to federal active duty and the amount of the employee's active duty base pay, housing and variable allowances, and subsistence allowance. The agency shall develop a plan by no later than October 1, 2005, subject to the notice, review, and objection procedures of s. 216.177, Florida Statutes, to administer the application and payment procedures for the matching grant program. The Agency for Workforce Innovation shall not award any matching grants prior to the approval of the plan.

Section 2. There is hereby appropriated the sum of \$1,862,961 from the General Revenue Fund and two positions to the Agency for Workforce Innovation for the purpose of implementing this act.

Section 3. A professional license issued in the state 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 shall be extended for up to 90 days after his or her return from federal active duty. If the license is renewed during the 90-day period after his or her return

from federal active duty, the member shall only be responsible for normal fees and activities relating to renewal of the license and shall not be charged any additional costs such as, but not limited to, late fees or delinquency fees. The member must present to the authority issuing the professional license a copy of his or her official military orders or a written verification from the member's commanding officer before the end of the 90-day period in order to qualify for the extension.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2005.

Approved by the Governor May 24, 2005.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 24, 2005.