CHAPTER 2024-251

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1329

An act relating to veterans; creating s. 265.8021, F.S.; defining the term "veteran"; creating the Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans' History Program within the Division of Arts and Culture of the Department of State as a Florida Folklife Program; providing the program's purpose; authorizing the division to request assistance from the Department of Veterans' Affairs; requiring the division's folklorists to seek out and identify certain veterans; authorizing the division or a folklorist to interview such veterans or invite them to submit written or electronic accounts of their experiences; authorizing the division to contract with a third-party vendor for a specified purpose; authorizing the division to adopt rules; amending s. 295.21, F.S.; revising the purpose of Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.; revising the duties of the corporation to require that it conduct specified activities directed toward its target market; defining the term "target market"; revising the number of members on the corporation's board of directors; deleting obsolete language; specifying that certain appointments made by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives may not be from their respective chambers; providing that the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint one member from his or her chamber to serve as ex officio, nonvoting members of the corporation's board of directors; making technical changes; amending s. 295.22, F.S.; defining terms; revising the purpose of the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program; revising the functions that Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., must perform in administering a specified program; authorizing the program to prioritize grant funds; revising the uses of specified grant funds; authorizing a business to receive certain other grant funds in addition to specified grant funds; authorizing the corporation to provide certain assistance to state agencies and entities, to provide a website that has relevant hyperlinks, and to collaborate with specified state agencies and other entities for specified purposes; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; making technical changes; amending s. 379.353, F.S.; providing free hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses to certain disabled veterans; providing that specified licenses issued to such veterans expire periodically and must be reissued upon request after such time period; amending s. 381.78, F.S.; revising the membership of the advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries; amending s. 1003.42, F.S.; requiring instruction on the history and importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day; amending s. 288.0001, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference; reenacting ss. 379.3581(2)(b) and 379.401(2)(b) and (3)(b), F.S., relating to special authorization hunting licenses and the suspension and forfeiture of licenses and permits, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made

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to s. 379.353, F.S., in references thereto; providing an appropriation and authorizing a position; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 265.8021, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

265.8021 Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans’ History Program.

(1) As used in this section, the term “veteran” has the same meaning as in s. 1.01(14).

(2) The Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans’ History Program is created within the Division of Arts and Culture as a Florida Folklife Program to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida’s veterans and the State of Florida’s military contributions throughout the nation’s history. The division may request assistance with the program from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

(3) In order to collect and preserve the stories and experiences of Florida’s veterans and the State of Florida’s military contributions throughout the nation’s history, the division’s folklorists shall seek out and identify those veterans who are willing to share their experiences. The division or a folklorist may interview veterans or invite veterans to submit written or electronic accounts of their experiences for inclusion in the program.

(4) As provided in s. 265.802, the division may contract with a third-party vendor to fulfill its responsibilities under subsection (3).

(5) The division may adopt rules to implement the program.

Section 2. Subsection (2), paragraph (a) of subsection (3), and paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of section 295.21, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

295.21 Florida Is For Veterans, Inc.—

(2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the corporation is to serve as the state’s initial point of military transition assistance dedicated to promoting Florida as a veteran-friendly state helping that seeks to provide veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities and promoting that promotes the hiring of veterans and their spouses by the business community. The corporation shall encourage retired and recently separated military personnel to remain in this the state or to make this the state their permanent residence. The corporation shall promote the value of military skill sets to businesses in this the state, assist in tailoring the training of veterans and their spouses to match the needs of the employment marketplace, and enhance the entrepreneurial skills of veterans and their spouses.

(3) DUTIES.—The corporation shall:

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(a) Conduct marketing, awareness, and outreach activities directed toward its target market. As used in this section, the term "target market" means servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried research to identify the target market and the educational and employment needs of those in the target market. The corporation shall contract with at least one entity pursuant to the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 and the provisions of s. 295.187 to perform the research. Such entity must have experience conducting market research on the veteran demographic. The corporation shall seek input from the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation on the scope, process, and focus of such research.

(4) GOVERNANCE.—

(a) The corporation shall be governed by an 11-member board of directors. The Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint three members to the board. The appointments made by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives may not be from the body over which he or she presides. In making appointments, the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives must consider representation by active or retired military personnel and their spouses representing a range of ages and persons with expertise in business, education, marketing, and information management. Additionally, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint one member from the body over which he or she presides to serve on the board as ex officio, nonvoting members.

Section 3. Section 295.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

295.22 Veterans Employment and Training Services Program.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—The Legislature finds that the state has a compelling interest in ensuring that each veteran or his or her spouse who is a resident of the state finds employment that meets his or her professional goals and receives the training or education necessary to meet those goals. The Legislature also finds that connecting dedicated, well-trained veterans with businesses that need a dedicated, well-trained workforce is of paramount importance. The Legislature recognizes that veterans or their spouses may not currently have the skills to meet the workforce needs of Florida employers and may require assistance in obtaining additional workforce training or in transitioning their skills to meet the demands of the marketplace. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program coordinate and meet the needs of veterans and their spouses and the business community to enhance the economy of this state.

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(2) **DEFINITIONS.**—For the purposes of this section, the term:

(a) “Secondary industry business” is a business that the state has an additional interest in supporting and for which veterans and their spouses may have directly transferable skills. Such businesses are in the fields of health care, agriculture, commercial construction, education, law enforcement, and public service.

(b) “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.

(c) “Target industry business” is a business as defined in s. 288.005.

(d) “Target market” means servicemembers of the United States Armed Forces who have 24 months or less until discharge, veterans with 36 months or less since discharge, and members of the Florida National Guard or reserves. The term includes spouses of such individuals, and surviving spouses of such individuals who have not remarried.

(3) **CREATION.**—The Veterans Employment and Training Services Program is created within the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to assist in connecting servicemembers, linking veterans, or their spouses who are in the target market in search of employment with businesses seeking to hire dedicated, well-trained workers and with opportunities for entrepreneurship education, training, and resources. The purpose of the program is to meet the workforce demands of businesses in the state by facilitating access to training and education in high-demand fields for such individuals and to inspire the growth and development of veteran-owned small businesses veterans or their spouses.

(4) **ADMINISTRATION.**—Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., shall administer the Veterans Employment and Training Services Program and perform all of the following functions:

(a) Conduct marketing and recruiting efforts directed at individuals within the target market veterans or their spouses who reside in or who have an interest in relocating to this state and who are seeking employment. Marketing must include information related to how a veteran’s military experience can be valuable to a target industry or secondary industry business. Such efforts may include attending veteran job fairs and events, hosting events for servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses or the business community, and using digital and social media and direct mail campaigns. The corporation shall also include such marketing as part of its main marketing campaign.

(b) Assist individuals in the target market veterans or their spouses who reside in or relocate to this state and who are seeking employment with target industry or secondary industry businesses. The corporation shall offer skills assessments to such individuals veterans or their spouses and assist
them in establishing employment goals and applying for and achieving gainful employment.

1. Assessment may include skill match information, skill gap analysis, résumé creation, translation of military skills into civilian workforce skills, and translation of military achievements and experience into generally understood civilian workforce skills.

2. Assistance may include providing the servicemember, veteran, or his or her spouse with information on current workforce demand by industry or geographic region, creating employment goals, and aiding or teaching general knowledge related to completing applications. The corporation may provide information related to industry certifications approved by the Department of Education under s. 1008.44 as well as information related to earning academic college credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military under s. 1004.096.

3. The corporation shall encourage veterans or their spouses to register with the state’s job bank system and may refer veterans to local one-stop career centers for further services. The corporation shall provide each veteran with information about state workforce programs and shall consolidate information about all available resources on one website that, if possible, includes a hyperlink to each resource’s website and contact information, if available.

4. Assessment and assistance may be in person or by electronic means, as determined by the corporation to be most efficient and best meet the needs of veterans or their spouses.

(c) Assist Florida target industry and secondary industry businesses in recruiting and hiring individuals in the target market veterans and veterans’ spouses. The corporation shall provide services to Florida businesses to meet their hiring needs by connecting businesses with suitable veteran applicants for employment. Suitable applicants include veterans or veterans’ spouses who have appropriate job skills or may need additional training to meet the specific needs of a business. The corporation shall also provide information about the state and federal benefits of hiring veterans.

(d) Create a grant program to provide funding to assist individuals in the target market veterans in meeting the workforce-skill needs of target industry and secondary industry businesses seeking to hire, promote, or generally improve specialized skills of veterans, establish criteria for approval of requests for funding, and maximize the use of funding for this program. Grant funds may be used only in the absence of available veteran-specific federally funded programs. Grants may fund specialized training specific to a particular business.

1. The program may prioritize if grant funds to be are used to provide a technical certificate, a license licensure, or nondegree training from the
Master Credentials List pursuant to s. 445.004(4)(h); any federally created certifications or licenses; and any skills-based industry certifications or licenses deemed relevant or necessary by the corporation. A degree. Funds may be allocated only upon a review that includes, but is not limited to, documentation of accreditation and licensure. Instruction funded through the program terminates when participants demonstrate competence at the level specified in the request but may not exceed 12 months. Preference shall be given to target industry businesses, as defined in s. 288.005, and to businesses in the defense supply, cloud virtualization, health care, or commercial aviation manufacturing industries.

2. Costs and expenditures are limited to $8,000 per veteran trainee. Qualified businesses must cover the entire cost for all of the training provided before receiving reimbursement from the corporation equal to 50 percent of the cost to train a veteran who is a permanent, full-time employee. Eligible costs and expenditures include, but are not limited to:

a. Tuition and fees.

b. Books and classroom materials.

c. Rental fees for facilities.

3. Before funds are allocated for a request pursuant to this section, the corporation shall prepare a grant agreement between the business requesting funds and the corporation. Such agreement must include, but need not be limited to:

a. Identification of the personnel necessary to conduct the instructional program, instructional program description, and any vendors used to conduct the instructional program.

b. Identification of the estimated duration of the instructional program.

c. Identification of all direct, training-related costs.

d. Identification of special program requirements that are not otherwise addressed in the agreement.

e. Permission to access aggregate information specific to the wages and performance of participants upon the completion of instruction for evaluation purposes. The agreement must specify that any evaluation published subsequent to the instruction may not identify the employer or any individual participant.

4. A business may receive a grant under any state program the Quick-Response Training Program created under s. 288.047 and a grant under this section for the same veteran trainee.

(e) Contract with one or more entities to administer an entrepreneur initiative program for individuals in the target market veterans in this state

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which connects business leaders in the state with such individuals veterans seeking to become entrepreneurs.

1. The corporation shall award each contract in accordance with the competitive bidding requirements in s. 287.057 to one or more public or private entities that:

a. Demonstrate the ability to implement the program and the commitment of resources, including financial resources, to such programs.

b. Have a demonstrated experience working with veteran entrepreneurs.

c. As determined by the corporation, have been recognized for their performance in assisting entrepreneurs to launch successful businesses in this the state.

2. Each contract must include performance metrics, including a focus on employment and business creation. The entity may also work with a university or college offering related programs to refer individuals in the target market veterans or to provide services. The entrepreneur initiative program may include activities and assistance such as peer-to-peer learning sessions, mentoring, technical assistance, business roundtables, networking opportunities, support of student organizations, speaker series, or other tools within a virtual environment.

(f) Administer a As the state's principal assistance organization under the United States Department of Defense's SkillBridge initiative program for target market transitioning service members who reside in, or who wish to reside in, this state. In administering the initiative, the corporation shall:

1. Establish and maintain, as applicable, its certification for the SkillBridge initiative program or any other similar workforce training and transition programs established by the United States Department of Defense;

2. Educate businesses, business associations, and eligible individuals in the target market transitioning service members on the SkillBridge initiative program and its benefits, and educate military command and personnel within the state on the opportunities available to eligible individuals in the target market transitioning service members through the SkillBridge program;

3. Assist businesses in obtaining approval for skilled workforce training curricula under the SkillBridge initiative program, including, but not limited to, apprenticeships, internships, or fellowships; and

4. Match eligible individuals in the target market transitioning service members who are deemed eligible for SkillBridge participation by their
military command with training opportunities offered by the corporation or participating businesses, with the intent of having them transitioning servicemembers achieve gainful employment in this state upon completion of their SkillBridge training.

(g) Assist veterans and their spouses in accessing training, education, and employment in health care professions.

(h) Coordinate with the Office of Veteran Licensure Services within the Department of Health to assist veterans and their spouses in obtaining licensure pursuant to s. 456.024.

(5) COLLABORATION.—

(a) The corporation may assist state agencies and entities with recruiting veteran talent into their workforces.

(b) The corporation is encouraged to, and may collaborate with state agencies and other entities in efforts to, maximize access to and provide information on one website that, if possible, includes hyperlinks to the websites of and contact information, if available, for state agencies and other entities that maintain benefits, services, training, education, and other resources that are available to veterans and their spouses.

(c) The corporation may collaborate with other state agencies and entities for outreach, information exchange, marketing, and referrals regarding programs and initiatives that include, but are not limited to, the program created by this section and those within any of the following:

1. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs:
   a. Access to benefits and assistance programs.
   b. Hope Navigators Program.

2. The Department of Commerce:
   a. The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program and local veteran employment representatives.
   b. CareerSource Florida, Inc., and local workforce boards employment and recruitment services.
   c. The Quick-Response Training Program.
   d. Efforts of the Florida Defense Support Task Force created under s. 288.987, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network, and the direct support organization established in s. 288.012(6).

3. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation, reciprocity and the availability of certain license and fee waivers.
4. The Department of Education:

   a. CAPE industry certifications under s. 1008.44.

   b. Information related to earning postsecondary credit at public post-secondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military under s. 1004.096.

5. The Department of Health:

   a. The Office of Veteran Licensure Services.

   b. The Florida Veterans Application for Licensure Online Response expedited licensing.


Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 379.353, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

379.353 Recreational licenses and permits; exemptions from fees and requirements.—

(1) The commission shall issue without fee hunting, freshwater fishing, and saltwater fishing licenses and permits shall be issued without fee to any resident who is certified or determined to be:

   a. To be Totally and permanently disabled for purposes of workers’ compensation under chapter 440 as verified by an order of a judge of compensation claims or written confirmation by the carrier providing workers’ compensation benefits, or to be totally and permanently disabled by the Railroad Retirement Board, by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor, or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces, or who holds a valid identification card issued under the provisions of s. 295.17, upon proof of such certification or determination same. Any license issued under this paragraph after January 1, 1997, expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

   b. To be Disabled by the United States Social Security Administration, upon proof of such certification or determination same. Any license issued under this paragraph after October 1, 1999, expires after 2 years and must be reissued, upon proof of certification of disability, every 2 years thereafter.

   c. A disabled veteran of the United States Armed Forces who was honorably discharged upon separation from service and who is certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor or by any branch of the United States Armed Forces as having a service-connected disability percentage rating of 50 percent or greater, upon proof of such certification or determination. Any license issued under this paragraph after
July 1, 2024, expires after 5 years and must be reissued, upon request, every 5 years thereafter.

A disability license issued after July 1, 1997, and before July 1, 2000, retains the rights vested thereunder until the license has expired.

Section 5. Subsection (1) of section 381.78, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

381.78 Advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries.—

(1) There is created within the department an 18-member advisory council on brain and spinal cord injuries. The council shall be composed of a minimum of four individuals who have brain injuries or are family members of individuals who have brain injuries, a minimum of four individuals who have spinal cord injuries or are family members of individuals who have spinal cord injuries, and a minimum of two individuals who represent the special needs of children who have brain or spinal cord injuries. The balance of the council members shall be physicians, other allied health professionals, administrators of brain and spinal cord injury programs, and representatives from support groups that have expertise in areas related to the rehabilitation of individuals who have brain or spinal cord injuries. Additionally, the council must include two veterans who have or have had a traumatic brain injury, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or subconcussive impacts due to military service, or include the family members of such veterans.

Section 6. Paragraph (u) of subsection (2) of section 1003.42, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.42 Required instruction.—

(2) Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education and the district school board, shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:

(u) 1. In order to encourage patriotism, the sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide. Such instruction must occur on or before Medal of Honor Day, Veterans’ Day, and Memorial Day. Members of the instructional staff are encouraged to use the assistance of local veterans and Medal of Honor recipients when practicable.

2. The history and importance of Veterans’ Day and Memorial Day. Such instruction may include two 45-minute lessons that occur on or before the respective holidays.

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The State Board of Education is encouraged to adopt standards and pursue assessment of the requirements of this subsection. Instructional programming that incorporates the values of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor and that is offered as part of a social studies, English Language Arts, or other schoolwide character building and veteran awareness initiative meets the requirements of paragraph (u).

Section 7. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of section 288.0001, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

288.0001 Economic Development Programs Evaluation.—The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) shall develop and present to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairs of the legislative appropriations committees the Economic Development Programs Evaluation.

(2) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and OPPAGA shall provide a detailed analysis of economic development programs as provided in the following schedule:

(c) By January 1, 2016, and every 3 years thereafter, an analysis of the following:

1. The tax exemption for semiconductor, defense, or space technology sales established under s. 212.08(5)(j).
2. The Military Base Protection Program established under s. 288.980.
3. The Quick Response Training Program established under s. 288.047.
4. The Incumbent Worker Training Program established under s. 445.003.
5. The direct-support organization and international trade and business development programs established or funded under s. 288.012 or s. 288.826.
6. The program established under s. 295.22(3) s. 295.22(2).

Section 8. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 379.353, Florida Statutes, in a reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 379.3581, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

379.3581 Hunter safety course; requirements; penalty.—

(2)

(b) A person born on or after June 1, 1975, who has not successfully completed a hunter safety course may apply to the commission for a special authorization to hunt under supervision. The special authorization for supervised hunting shall be designated on any license or permit required under this chapter for a person to take game or fur-bearing animals. A
person issued a license with a special authorization to hunt under supervision must hunt under the supervision of, and in the presence of, a person 21 years of age or older who is licensed to hunt pursuant to s. 379.354 or who is exempt from licensing requirements or eligible for a free license pursuant to s. 379.353.

Section 9. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment made by this act to section 379.353, Florida Statutes, in references thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (2) and paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section 379.401, Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

379.401 Penalties and violations; civil penalties for noncriminal infractions; criminal penalties; suspension and forfeiture of licenses and permits.

(2) LEVEL TWO VIOLATIONS.—

(b)1. A person who commits a Level Two violation but who has not been convicted of a Level Two or higher violation within the past 3 years commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. Unless the stricter penalties in subparagraph 3. or subparagraph 4. apply, a person who commits a Level Two violation within 3 years after a previous conviction for a Level Two or higher violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of $250.

3. Unless the stricter penalties in subparagraph 4. apply, a person who commits a Level Two violation within 5 years after two previous convictions for a Level Two or higher violation, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of $500 and a suspension of any recreational license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for 1 year. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the privilege to obtain such license or permit and the suspension of the ability to exercise any privilege granted under any exemption in s. 379.353.

4. A person who commits a Level Two violation within 10 years after three previous convictions for a Level Two or higher violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of $750 and a suspension of any recreational license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for 3 years. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the privilege to obtain such license or permit and the suspension of the ability to exercise any privilege granted under s. 379.353. If the recreational license or permit being suspended was an annual license or permit, any privileges under ss. 379.353 and 379.354 may not be acquired for a 3-year period following the date of the violation.

(3) LEVEL THREE VIOLATIONS.—

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(b)1. A person who commits a Level Three violation but who has not been convicted of a Level Three or higher violation within the past 10 years commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

2. A person who commits a Level Three violation within 10 years after a previous conviction for a Level Three or higher violation commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, with a minimum mandatory fine of $750 and a suspension of any recreational license or permit issued under s. 379.354 for the remainder of the period for which the license or permit was issued up to 3 years. Such suspension shall include the suspension of the privilege to obtain such license or permit and the ability to exercise any privilege granted under s. 379.353. If the recreational license or permit being suspended was an annual license or permit, any privileges under ss. 379.353 and 379.354 may not be acquired for a 3-year period following the date of the violation.

3. A person who commits a violation of s. 379.354(17) shall receive a mandatory fine of $1,000. Any privileges under ss. 379.353 and 379.354 may not be acquired for a 5-year period following the date of the violation.

Section 10. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the sum of $91,207 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated to the Division of Arts and Culture of the Department of State, and one full-time equivalent position with associated salary rate of 68,771 is authorized, to implement and administer the Major John Leroy Haynes Florida Veterans’ History Program as created by this act.

Section 11. This act shall take effect July 1, 2024.

Approved by the Governor June 21, 2024.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 21, 2024.