

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 95 State Parks

SPONSOR(S): Bembry

TIED BILLS: None **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 236

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee	13 Y, 0 N	Cunningham	Blalock
2) Community & Military Affairs Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N	Tait	Hoagland
3) State Affairs Committee		Cunningham	Hamby

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Division of Recreation and Parks (division) within the Department of Environmental Protection oversees Florida's 160 state parks. Currently, active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces (armed forces), National Guard, or reserve components receive a twenty-five percent discount on annual entrance passes to Florida's state parks. Veterans with service-connected disabilities receive free for life family annual entrance passes. Surviving spouses of deceased members of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve components who have fallen in combat also receive free for life family annual entrance passes. Eligibility for these discounts is verified by the presentation of written documentation to the division.

The bill provides for parents of deceased members of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve components who have fallen in combat to receive free lifetime annual entrance passes to Florida's state parks. Eligibility for these passes is verified by the presentation of written documentation to the division.

The division states that there will be a \$35,000 reduction in state park revenue. However, the division believes that the publicity and goodwill earned by this bill may lead to increased visitation to the parks, which may offset the loss of revenues.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

The Division of Recreation and Parks (division) within the Department of Environmental Protection (department) oversees Florida's 160 state parks. The division has statutory authority to charge reasonable fees for the use or operation of facilities and concessions in the state parks.¹ The monies collected from these fees are deposited into the State Park Trust Fund. The trust fund monies are to be used for the administration, improvement and maintenance of the state parks, as well as any acquisition of lands for state park purposes.

The division offers two types of annual passes: the individual annual entrance pass for \$60 and the family annual entrance pass for \$120. The family annual entrance pass allows up to eight people in a group admittance to most state parks.² According to the department, annual entrance pass sales accounted for \$1,758,157.95 in revenues during Fiscal Year 2009-10.³

Active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces (armed forces), National Guard, or reserve components receive a twenty-five percent discount on annual entrance passes to Florida's state parks. Veterans with service-connected disabilities receive free for life family annual entrance passes. Surviving spouses of members of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve components who have fallen in combat also receive free for life annual entrance passes.

The division offers active-duty Florida National Guard members, their spouses and minor children a fifty percent discount on the daily admission fee. In addition, the division offers a fifty percent discount on the daily admission fees for Florida residents participating in the Food Stamp program and a fifty percent discount on the base camping fees for Florida residents who are 65 years and older or are 100% disabled.

The division prescribes what constitutes satisfactory written documentation to prove eligibility for discounts.⁴

Satisfactory written documentation to prove eligibility for the 25% discount on Annual Entrance Passes for active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve units includes:

- Current military identification card showing the bearer as active duty, reserve, or retired member of a branch of the US Armed Forces, or
- Personal identification (i.e.: driver license, etc.) and
- Most recent DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, showing the named individual's Character of Service as Honorable, or
- Other current official documentation from the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Veterans Affairs or an appropriate branch of one of those agencies, naming the bearer as active duty, reserve, veteran, or retired member of the US Armed Forces.

¹ Section 258.014(1), F.S.

² The two exceptions are Homosassa Springs and Weeki Wachee Springs, which limit admittance to two people per family annual entrance pass.

³ Information on file with the House Community and Military Affairs Subcommittee.

⁴ <http://www.floridastateparks.org/thingstoknow/annualpass.cfm>, last accessed March 1, 2011.

Satisfactory written documentation to prove eligibility for the Free for Life Family Annual Entrance Passes for honorably discharged U.S. veterans who have service-connected disabilities includes:

- Personal identification (i.e.: driver license) and
- Most recent DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, showing the named individual's Character of Service as Honorable, or
- Other current official documentation from the Department of Defense, or one of those agencies, naming the bearer as veteran or retired military, and
- Current official documentation from the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Veterans Affairs or an appropriate branch of one of the those agencies, naming the bearer as having sustained a service-related disability.

Satisfactory documentation to prove eligibility for Free for Life Family Annual Entrance Passes for surviving spouses of deceased members of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve units who have fallen in combat includes:

- Personal identification (i.e.: driver license) and
- The final DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, showing the date of death as the same date as the date of separation, and
- Marriage certificate or license, or death certificate showing the bearer as the spouse of the military member who has fallen in combat.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill provides for parents of deceased members of the armed forces, National Guard, and reserve components who have fallen in combat to receive free lifetime annual entrance passes.

Required documentation to prove eligibility will include:

- Personal identification (i.e.: driver license) and
- Proof of parenthood, showing the bearer as the parent of the military member who has fallen in combat, and
- The final DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, showing the date of death as the same date as the date of separation, or
- The DD Form 1300, Report of Casualty.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 258.0145, F.S., to include parents of veterans who fell in combat.

Section 2: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2011.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The division staff stated an estimated \$35,000 fiscal impact in their analysis of the bill. (See "Fiscal Comments" section below.)

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

See "Fiscal Comments" section below.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Parents of deceased members of the armed forces, National Guard, or reserve components who have fallen in combat will benefit from the legislation.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The division states that there will be a \$35,000 reduction in state park revenue. However, according to the division, the publicity and goodwill earned by the state is expected result in increased visitation, which should offset any loss of revenues.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This legislation does not appear to affect county or municipal government.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES