

MCLdepartmentSeptember2017

Dear Commandant LaMont

August 15, 2017

The 2018 Legislative session will start earlier this coming year. Normally it has a March starting date. However for 2018, the legislature will convene on January 9th and is scheduled to end "sine die" (without another day) 60 calendar days later on March 9th.

--Key deadlines for the upcoming session are as follows:

- August 1, 2017 is the deadline for filing "claims bills". I have examined those that have been filed and see none that appears to directly affect the MCL.
- November 17, 2017 is the deadline for legislators to submit requests for drafts of general bills and joint resolutions, including companion bills.
- January 5, 2018 is the deadline for approving final drafts.
- February 27, 2018 is the last day for regularly scheduled committee meetings (but the rules can be waived—and usually are—to hold meetings beyond that date.
- March 6 is the last day that a budget can be finished for the Legislature to adjourn on time (there is a constitutionally-mandated 72-hour "cooling off" review period).

--Interim committee meetings are used to review proposed legislation. The committees can pass bills and send them to the House or Senate calendars, but final passage cannot occur until the Legislature convenes in January. Scheduled interim dates for 2017 are as follows:

- September—the week of the 11th.
- October—the weeks of the 9th & 23rd.
- November—the weeks of the 6th & 13th.
- December—the week of the 4th.

--I have checked with the staff of the relevant veterans affairs committees at each end of the hall, and they have yet to announce a committee meeting time or agenda.

--Pre-filed Legislation has been released in the Senate but not yet in the House. Senate bills of interest to the MCL include:

- SB 82 by Sen. Steube—is a 4-page bill that, subject to legislative appropriation, allows the Department of Veterans' Affairs to contract with one or more individuals, corporations not-for-profit, state universities, or Florida College System Institutions to provide the following alternative treatment options for veterans who have been certified By the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the U. S. Armed forces as having a traumatic brain injury or posttraumatic stress disorder: (a) Accelerated resolution therapy, (b) Acupuncture, (c) Equine therapy, (d) Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, (e) Mediation therapy, (f) Music therapy, (g) Outdoor and indoor sports therapy, (h) Service animal training therapy, and (i) Yoga therapy. It creates a new s. 295.156, F. S., to define these terms and provide criteria for providing them. See the bill

for details. It is effective July 1, 2018, and as mentioned above, is subject to appropriations being provided.

- SB 100 by Sen. Steube—is a 4-page bill deleting the current \$1 fee for adding the word “veteran” to an identification card or driver’s license. It also revises the documentation necessary to present to the state to obtain the designation. Currently, s. 322.051, F. S., requires the applicant to present a DD Form 214. The bill also allows the following forms of proof: Veterans health identification card issued by the U. S. DVA, Veterans identification card issued by the U. S. DVA, and other acceptable forms specified by the State DVA. The bill is effective July 1, 2018.

There are also a few bills that, while not specifically aimed at veterans, may be beneficial to them. They include:

- SB 58 by Sen. Hukill—is a 2-page bill increasing from \$50,000 to \$75,000 the amount of income exempt from the state business tax under s. 220.14, F. S. To the extent that a veteran owns a small business, it may be of interest.
- SB 76 by Sen. Hukill—is a 2-page bill creating a small business Saturday sales tax holiday, allowing certain enumerated small businesses to have the option of not having to charge and collect sales tax on Saturday, November 24, 2018. To the extent that a veteran has a retail business, it may be an interesting option. It is effective July 1, 2018.

--Miscellaneous Issues

- The Florida Chamber Foundation held its 2017 Military, Defense & Veterans Opportunities Summit in Orlando. It gathered leaders from Florida’s military and defense industry, economic development experts, policy makers and the business community to examine the challenges facing Florida throughout the next 15-plus years and identify solutions. I have yet to see any recommendations but we may want to keep an eye out for their final report.
- The Spring/Summer 2017 Newsletter said that the 589 Toll Road in Tampa may soon have a Veterans Expressway travel lane option for veterans. If you think that it may be of interest, details may be found at <http://floridaexpresslanes.com>.