

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

BILL: CS/SB 2546

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K-12 Committee and Senator Storms

SUBJECT: Compact/Educational Opportunity for Military Children

DATE: March 27, 2008

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	deMarsh-Mathues	Matthews	ED	Fav/CS
2.			MS	
3.			GO	
4.			EA	
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

The bill creates the Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which is designed to assist the educational continuity of students, whose parents are military service members.

The compact also provides for the creation of an Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The bill authorizes the Governor to designate a Compact Commissioner and Military Family Education Liaison and creates the State Advisory Council to make recommendations for compliance with the compact.

The act sunsets two years following the effective date of the act, which is July 1, 2008, or upon enactment of the interstate compacts, whichever occurs later.

This bill creates sections 1000.36, 1000.37, 1000.38, and 1000.39 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

According to the Council of State Governments (CSG), the average military student faces transition challenges more than twice during high school and most military children will have six to nine different school systems in their lives from kindergarten to 12th grade.¹ With more than half of all military personnel supporting families, the challenges of reassignment and long

¹ Council of State Governments, See <http://www.csg.org/programs/ncic/EducatingMilitaryChildrenCompact.aspx>

deployments are key considerations when making long-term life choices for military children and include the following.²

- Transfer of records;
- Course sequencing;
- Graduation requirements;
- Exclusion from extracurricular activities;
- Redundant or missed entrance/exit tests;
- Kindergarten and first grade entrance age variations; and
- Power of custodial parents while parents are deployed.

The CSG, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Personnel and Readiness, drafted an interstate compact that addresses the educational transition issues of children of military families, including eligibility, enrollment, placement, and graduation.³ In addition, the compact provides for a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with enforcement and compliance mechanisms.⁴ According to the CSG, eighteen states have introduced a measure related to this compact.⁵

Florida is a party to various compacts with other states, including the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children,⁶ the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance,⁷ the Interstate Compact on Mental Health,⁸ and the Interstate Compact on Juveniles.⁹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates the Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which is designed to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and the deployment of their parents.

Application

The compact applies to children of the following:

- Active duty members of the uniformed services, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders;

² *Id.*

³ Mary Branham Dusenberry, *Military Moves: New Compact Aims to Ease Education Challenges Faced by Military Children After Parent's Transfer*, Council of State Governments, 2008. See also U.S. Department of Defense: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=46783> and http://www.usa4militaryfamilies.dod.mil/portal/page/mhf/USA4/USA4_HOME_1?current_id=22.60.30.0.0.0.0.0&content_id=242181

⁴ See <http://www.csg.org/programs/ncic/documents/FinalCompactLanguage011108.pdf>

⁵ Council of State Government, *State-by-State Status Chart*, March 20, 2008. See <http://www.csg.org/programs/ncic/EducatingMilitaryChildrenCompact.aspx> and <http://www.csg.org/programs/ncic/documents/State-by-statechart3-20-08.pdf>

⁶ s. 409.401, F.S.

⁷ Section 409.406, F.S., authorizes the Department of Children and Family Services, by and through its secretary, to participate in the development of and negotiate and enter into interstate compacts on behalf of the state.

⁸ s. 394.479, F.S.

⁹ ss. 985.801-985.807, F.S.

- Members or veterans of the uniformed services who are severely injured and medically discharged or retired for a period of one year after medical discharge or retirement;
- Members of the uniformed services who die on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty for a period of one year after death; and
- School districts.

The compact does not apply to children of the following:

- Inactive members of the national guard and military reserves;
- Members of the uniformed services now retired not covered above;
- Veterans of the uniformed services not covered above; and
- Other U.S. Department of Defense personnel and other federal agency civilian and contract employees not defined as active duty members of the uniformed services.

Enrollment

For enrollment of a student, the compact:

- Provides that schools must share educational records in a timely manner and allows the sending school to provide the parent with an unofficial copy that may be used until the official record is verified;
- Provides specific timelines for students to obtain required immunizations in the receiving state; and
- Provides that a student must be allowed to continue their enrollment at grade level in the receiving state commensurate with his or her grade level in the sending state at the time of transition.

Placement

For placement of the student, the compact:

- Provides that when a student transfers before or during the school year, the receiving state school must initially honor placement of the student in educational courses (e.g., honors, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and vocational, technical and career pathways courses), based on the student's enrollment in the sending state's school or educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state if the courses are offered; however, the school in the receiving state may perform subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement and continued enrollment of the student;
- Requires the receiving state to initially provide comparable services to a student with disabilities based on his or her current Individualized Education Plan; however, this does not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student;
- Provides school districts with flexibility in waiving course or program prerequisites, or other preconditions for placement in courses or programs offered under the jurisdiction of the district; and
- Provides that a student whose parent is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, must be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the district superintendent to visit with his or her parent prior to leave or deployment.

Graduation

For graduation of a student, the compact:

- Requires school districts to waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in a local education agency in another state;
- Requires districts to provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework for the student to graduate on time, if a waiver is not granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school;
- Requires states to accept exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state, national norm-referenced achievement tests, or alternative testing, in lieu of testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state; and
- Requires the sending and receiving districts to ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending district, if the student transfers in his or her senior year, is ineligible to graduate from the receiving district after considering all alternatives, and meets the graduation requirements of the sending district.

State Coordination

Each compact state member must establish a state council to coordinate government agencies, school districts, and military installations for the state to participate and comply with the compact.

Governance

The compact also provides for the creation of an Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children to provide general oversight of the agreement, create and enforce rules governing the compact's operation, and provide a venue for solving interstate issues and disputes. Under the terms of the compact, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government are compelled to enforce the agreement. Any amendment to the compact is not effective or binding on the commission and the member states until it is enacted into law by unanimous consent of the member states. A member state may withdraw from the compact by repealing the statute that enacted the compact. A state's withdrawal does not take effect until one year after the effective date of the repealed statute and until the Governor of each member state has received written notice.

Effective Date

The compact would be effective when ten or more states adopt the compact into law. The bill directs the Secretary of State to provide a copy of the act to the states that approve the compact. The bill provides that the effective date of the compact may be no earlier than December 1, 2007.

Other Compact Provisions

In addition to the creation of the compact, the bill also provides for the following:

- Authorizes the Governor to designate a Compact Commissioner, the voting member representing the state in the commission, and a state Military Family Education Liaison;
- Creates the State Advisory Council to make recommendations for complying with the compact and provides that chapter 119, F.S., and s. 286.011, F.S., relating to public records and public meetings, apply to the proceedings and records of the council; and

- Provides for future legislative review and repeal of ss. 1000.36, 1000.37, 1000.38, and 1000.39, F.S., two years after the effective date of the bill, which is the later of the effective date of the compact or July 1, 2008.

In the newly created s. 1003.39, F.S., the bill specifies that the department must provide administrative support to the council, but does not indicate the name of the agency. Presumably, this means the Department of Education.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. Other Constitutional Issues:

Compacts are considered to be formal agreements or contracts that bind two or more states for formal cooperation between states.¹⁰ States may enter into agreements or compacts with other states, provided that Congress gives its consent.¹¹

The bill provides that the laws of member states are superseded to the extent they conflict with the compact. This provision appears to give the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children a veto of the Legislature's power to enact laws for the state, as provided in Article III of the State Constitution. In reviewing the legal status of an interstate agency created by an interstate compact, the court noted:

Upon entering into an interstate compact, a state effectively surrenders a portion of its sovereignty; the compact governs the relations of the parties with respect to the subject matter of the agreement and is superior to both prior and subsequent law. Further, when enacted, a compact constitutes not only law, but a contract which may not be amended, modified, or otherwise altered without the consent of all parties. It, therefore, appears settled that one party may not enact legislation which would impose burdens upon the compact absent the concurrence of the other signatories.¹²

¹⁰ 72 Am Jur. 2d States Etc. § 10.

¹¹ U.S. Const. Art. I § 10.

¹² *C. T. Hellmuth & Associates, Inc. v. Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority*, 414 F.Supp. 408, 409 (D.C.Md. 1876).

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Under the compact, the Interstate Commission may levy an annual assessment on member states according to a formula. According to the Department of Education (DOE), the bill would have a fiscal impact on local school districts for identifying and placing children of military families, but the cost cannot be determined precisely without further information about the number of children involved. Additionally, the DOE estimates that total state costs associated with the creation of the State Advisory Council would be \$42,600 for meeting materials, travel, and per diem each year. The department notes that these expenses could be covered by several state agencies, not all necessarily by the DOE.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS for SB 2546:

- Authorizes the Governor to designate a Compact Commissioner, who is the state's voting representative before the interstate commission, and a state Military Family Education Liaison;
- Creates the State Advisory Council to make recommendations for compliance with the compact;
- Specifies that the provisions of chapter 119, F.S., and s. 286.011, F.S., relating to public records and public meetings, apply to the proceedings and records of the council;
- Provides for administrative support to the council; and
- Provides for future legislative review and repeal of ss. 1000.36, 1000.37, 1000.38, and 1000.39, F.S.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
