

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 Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee

BILL: CS/SB 2256

INTRODUCER: Committee on Environmental Preservation and Conservation and Senator Baker

SUBJECT: State Park Entrance Fees/Military Personnel

DATE: April 20, 2010 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Wiggins	Kiger	EP	Fav/CS
2.			FT	
3.			GA	
4.				
5.				
6.				

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes |
| B. AMENDMENTS..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Significant amendments were recommended |

I. Summary:

The Committee Substitute (CS) provides for active duty members and veterans of the United States Armed Forces (armed forces) and reserve forces to receive a 25 percent discount on annual entrance passes to Florida's state parks. The CS also provides for veterans with service-connected disabilities and surviving spouses of members of the armed forces and reserves who have fallen in combat to receive a lifetime family annual entrance pass at no charge. The Division of Recreation and Parks (division), within the Department of Environmental Protection (department), shall prescribe what constitutes satisfactory documentation to evidence eligibility.

The CS also reinstates language regarding the duties of the division into Chapter 258 of F.S. This language had previously been located in s. 418.12, F.S.

The CS provides an effective date of July 1, 2010.

The CS creates s. 258.0145 and s. 258.004 F.S.

II. Present Situation:

The division within the department oversees Florida's 160 state parks. The division has statutory authority¹ to charge reasonable fees for the use or operation of facilities and concessions in the state parks. The monies collected from these fees are deposited into the State Park Trust Fund (trust fund), which is used for the administration, improvement and maintenance of the state parks and any acquisition of lands for state park purposes.

The division offers two types of annual entrance passes; the family annual entrance pass for \$120 and the individual annual entrance pass for \$60. At this time, there are no discounts on the purchase price of annual passes.

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

Currently, more than half of the fifty states in the United States offer some form of discount for entry into their state parks for veterans of the armed forces.

The duties and function of the Division of Recreation and Parks as outlined in s. 418.12, F.S. are the following:

- study and appraise the recreation needs of the state and assemble and disseminate information relative to recreation;
- provide consultation assistance to the Department of Community Affairs and to local governing units as to the promotion, organization, and administration of local recreation systems and as to the planning and design of local recreation areas and facilities;
- assist in recruiting training, and placing recreational personnel;
- sponsor and promote recreation institutes, workshops, seminars, and conferences throughout the state;
- cooperate with state and federal agencies, private organization, and commercial and industrial interests in the promotion of a state recreation program; and
- coordinate recreation function and facilities of flood control and water management districts.

During the current legislative session, the Military and Local Affairs Policy Committee sponsored and passed HB 7049, which repealed language relating to recreation centers and removed language from s. 418.12, F.S., that specified the duties of the division. Initially, the department saw no harm in repealing the language but later realized having this language in statute is necessary should they need to defend this authority in court. CS/HB 1145 the House companion to this CS also reinstates the statutory language that outlines the division's duties.

¹ s. 258.014 (1), F.S.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1: Creates s. 258.0145, F.S., to provide that:

- Active duty members and veterans of the armed forces and reserve forces shall receive a 25% percent discount on annual entrance passes to Florida's state parks.
- Veterans with service-connected disabilities shall receive a lifetime family annual entrance pass at no charge.
- Surviving spouses of members of the armed forces and reserve forces who have fallen in combat shall receive a lifetime family annual entrance pass at no charge.

The CS directs that the division shall prescribe what constitutes satisfactory documentation to evidence eligibility.

Section 2: Amends s. 258.004, F.S., to reinstate the duties of the Division of Recreation and Parks that were previously located in s. 418.12, F.S.

The division's duties are to include the following:

- study and appraise the recreation needs of the state and assemble and disseminate information relative to recreation;
- provide consultation assistance to the Department of Community Affairs and to local governing units as to the protection, organization, and administration of local recreation systems and the planning and design of local recreation areas and facilities;
- assist in recruiting training, and placing recreation personnel;
- sponsor and promote recreation institutes, workshops, seminars and conferences throughout the state; and
- cooperate with state and federal agencies, private organizations, and commercial and industrial interests in the promotion of a state recreation program.

Section 3: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2010.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

A. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

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

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Persons who are active duty armed forces, reserve forces, veterans and/or surviving spouses will benefit from the waived entrance fees.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The department states that there will be a potential reduction in revenues to the State Park Trust Fund, which is indeterminate at this time. However, the department states that the publicity and goodwill earned by the state is expected to offset the loss in revenues and result in increased visitation, thereby generating additional economic benefit for local communities and the state.

For the most part, there would be no fiscal impact on local governments. However, according to the department's website, some counties impose a surcharge in addition to the division's entrance fee. It is unclear whether the surcharge would be waived as well as the entrance fee. If the surcharges were waived, this may represent a potential reduction in revenue for the counties that impose the surcharge.

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 by Environmental Preservation and Conservation on April 20, 2010:

The CS reinstates language regarding the duties of the Division of Recreation and Parks, within the Department of Environmental Protection, into Chapter 258 of the Florida Statutes. This language had previously been located in Chapter 418, F.S.

B. Amendments:

None.