

From: Governor's Press Office [Governor'sPressOffice@eog.myflorida.com]
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Gov. Scott Announces \$178 Million Investment for Florida's Active Military, Veterans and Their Families

Also supports Proposal that Gives Free Tuition to Families of Fallen First Responders, Law Enforcement & Military

RIVIERA BEACH, Fla. – Today, Governor Rick Scott announced that he will propose \$178 million in total funding to support active military, veterans and their families in Florida as part of his 2018-2019 recommended budget. He also announced his support for a proposal being considered by the Constitution Revision Commission to provide free tuition to the families of fallen first responders, state law enforcement officers and military members who have lost their lives in the line of duty. The proposal provides 120 credit hours per family at a Florida state college, university or participating technical school. Each family would be entitled to one four-year degree. If passed by the CRC, the proposal will be on the ballot in 2018 and would require approval of 60 percent of Florida voters. The CRC proposal, P 49, was filed by Commissioner Emery Gainey and can be found [HERE](#).

Governor Scott said, "I am a proud Navy veteran and my father served during World War II, and this Veterans Day, I was honored to remember the courageous people I had the opportunity to serve with. There is no greater sacrifice to one's community or country than giving your life to protect others. We will never be able to repay our fallen officers or service members who have bravely given their lives, but it is our duty to ensure that their families are supported as if they were our own.

"I am proud to announce today that I will propose a \$178 million investment to help make sure Florida continues to be the most military and veteran-friendly state in the nation for years to come. Our military, first responders and law enforcement members make the courageous decision to put their lives on the line every day to protect our country, families, and communities and I look forward to working with the Legislature during the upcoming session as we continue to do all we can to support these heroes. I will also fight this year to give voters the chance to approve a proposal to be included in our state's constitution that gives free tuition to the families of our fallen law enforcement, first responders and military members."

Governor Scott's \$178 million investment for Florida's active military, veterans and their families includes:

- \$200,000 for search and rescue vessels and protective equipment for our National Guardsmen to use during deployment;
- Nearly \$8 million to begin operations at the Lake Baldwin State Veteran Nursing Home, which will allow this facility to serve more than 110 veterans in the coming year;
- \$2 million for Building Homes for Heroes to build and modify homes for veterans who were severely injured while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- \$2 million for the Florida Defense Support Task Force, which helps support our military and defense communities and the many families who rely on them; and
- \$2.7 million to support veterans looking to obtain employment, start their own businesses and make Florida their home, including \$1 million for Veterans Florida to continue their mission of helping veterans find great jobs at Florida businesses.

Walton County Sheriff Mike Adkinson, President of the Florida Sheriffs Association, said, "The Sheriffs of Florida support proposal 49, brought forward by Sheriff Gainey, that provides death benefits to surviving family members of first responders who are killed or injured in the line of duty. Our most important asset is our people, and their families who support them in their service to our communities. Securing the future of our families is a noble act, and these death benefits provide educational opportunities for the surviving spouse or children to ensure they are able to provide for their families and contribute to the economy. We thank Governor Rick Scott and are grateful to the Constitution Revision Commission for considering this proposal as it truly does the right thing for our heroes and their families."

In 2016, Governor Rick Scott signed SB 7012 which protects the families of fallen law enforcement officers and first responders by providing the fallen individual's monthly salary to the beneficiary for their lifetime. The expanded benefit applies to all Special Risk class members of the Florida Retirement System. Special Risk includes law enforcement officers, firefighters, correctional officers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, probation officers, and other employees whose job may put them at risk.

More details on the Governor's proposed budget will be made available in the coming weeks.

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