

Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Conforming Bill
Relating to the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus
Payment Program

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program; amending s. 445.08, F.S.; renaming the program the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program; adding firefighters as eligible applicants under the program; providing conforming changes; providing definitions for firefighter, newly employed firefighter, and fire service provider; revising program eligibility standards related to full-time employment; providing a definition for break in service; requiring the Department of Commerce to include in its annual program plan standards for determining an acceptable break in service with regard to program eligibility; adding the Division of State Fire Marshal to the entities which the Department of Commerce must consult quarterly under the program; requiring the Division of State Fire Marshal to adopt rules; repealing the program expiration date; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 445.08, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

445.08 Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program.—

(1) For the purposes of this section, the term:

(a) "Commission" means the Criminal Justice Standards and

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Training Commission within the Department of Law Enforcement.

(b) "Employing agency" has the same meaning as provided in s. 943.10(4).

(c) "Law enforcement officer" has the same meaning as provided in s. 943.10(1).

(d) "Newly employed officer" means a person who gains or is appointed to full-time employment as a certified law enforcement officer with a Florida criminal justice employing agency on or after July 1, 2022, and who has never before been employed as a law enforcement officer in this state.

(e) "Program" means the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program.

(f) "Fire service provider" has the same meaning provided in s. 633.102(13).

(g) "Firefighter" has the same meaning as provided in s. 633.102(9).

(h) "Newly employed firefighter" means a firefighter as defined in s. 633.102(9) who has never been employed as a firefighter in this state and on or after July 1, 2026, gains or is appointed to full-time employment as a firefighter.

(2) (a) There is created within the department the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program to aid in the recruitment of law enforcement officers and firefighters within the state. The purpose of the program is to administer one-time bonus payments of up to \$5,000 to each newly employed officer or newly employed firefighter within the state.

(b) Bonus payments provided to eligible newly employed

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officers or newly employed firefighter are contingent upon legislative appropriations and shall be prorated subject to the amount appropriated for the program.

(3) Each bonus payment shall be adjusted to include 7.65 percent for the officer's or firefighter's share of Federal Insurance Contribution Act tax on the payment.

(4) The department shall develop an annual plan for the administration of the program and distribution of bonus payments. Applicable employing agencies shall assist the department with the collection of any data necessary to determine bonus payment amounts and to distribute the bonus payments, and shall otherwise provide the department with any information or assistance needed to fulfill the requirements of this section. At a minimum, the plan must include:

(a) The method for determining the estimated number of newly employed officers and newly employed firefighters to gain or be appointed to full-time employment during the applicable fiscal year.

(b) The minimum eligibility requirements a newly employed officer or newly employed firefighter must meet to receive and retain a bonus payment, which must include:

1. Obtaining certification for employment or appointment as a law enforcement officer pursuant to s. 943.1395 or as a firefighter pursuant to s. 633.408.

2. Gaining full-time employment with a Florida criminal justice agency or with a fire service provider.

3. Maintaining ~~continuous~~ full-time employment as a law

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82 enforcement officer with a Florida criminal justice agency or a
83 firefighter with a fire service provider for at least 2 years
84 from the date on which the officer or firefighter obtained
85 certification. The required 2-year employment period may be
86 satisfied by maintaining full-time employment at one or more
87 employing agencies or fire service providers, but such period
88 must not contain any break in service longer than 180 ~~15~~
89 calendar days.

90 (c) The standards by which the department will determine
91 under what circumstances a break in service is acceptable. A law
92 enforcement officer or firefighter must provide documentation to
93 the department justifying a break in service. For purposes of
94 this section, the term "break in service" means a period of time
95 during which the person is employed with a Florida criminal
96 justice agency or a fire service provider but is not employed as
97 a full-time law enforcement officer or firefighter or a period
98 of time during which the person is in between employment as a
99 full-time law enforcement officer or firefighter for no longer
100 than 15 days. The time period for any break in service does not
101 count toward satisfying the 2-year full-time employment
102 requirement of this section.

103 (d) ~~(e)~~ The method that will be used to determine the bonus
104 payment amount to be distributed to each newly employed officer
105 or newly employed firefighter.

106 (e) ~~(f)~~ The method that will be used to distribute bonus
107 payments to applicable employing agencies or fire service
108 providers for distribution to eligible officers or firefighters.

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Such method should prioritize distributing bonus payments to eligible officers or firefighters in the most efficient and quickest manner possible.

(g)~~(f)~~ The estimated cost to the department associated with developing and administering the program and distributing bonus payment funds.

(g)~~(f)~~ The method by which an officer or firefighter must reimburse the state if he or she received a bonus payment under the program, but failed to maintain continuous employment for the required 2-year period. Reimbursement shall not be required if an officer or firefighter is discharged by his or her employing agency or fire service provider for a reason other than misconduct as designated on the affidavit of separation completed by the employing agency or fire service provider and maintained by the commission.

The department may establish other criteria deemed necessary to determine bonus payment eligibility and distribution.

(5) The department shall consult quarterly with the commission and the Division of State Fire Marshal to verify the certification of newly employed officers and newly employed firefighters and affidavits of separation submitted to the commission and the Division of State Fire Marshal which detail officer misconduct and firefighter misconduct. The Division of State Fire Marshal shall define firefighter misconduct in rule.

(6) The department shall submit the plan to the Executive Office of the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget, the chair

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of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and the chair of the House Appropriations Committee by October 1 of each year. The department is authorized to submit budget amendments pursuant to chapter 216 as necessary to release appropriated funds for distribution to applicable employing agencies and fire service providers under this program.

(7) The funding allocation for the bonus payments must be used solely to comply with the requirements of this section, but applicable collective bargaining units are not otherwise precluded from wage negotiation.

(8) The department shall adopt rules to implement this section.

~~(9) This subsection expires July 1, 2026.~~

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.