

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2011 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Judiciary

HB 7085 — Open Government Sunset Review/Court Monitors in Guardianship Cases

by Government Operations Subcommittee and Rep. Young (SB 568 by Judiciary Committee)

Court monitoring is a mechanism courts use to review a guardian's activities, assess the well-being of the ward, and ensure that the ward's assets are being protected. Court monitors may be appointed by a court, on a nonemergency or an emergency basis, upon inquiry by an interested person or upon its own motion. A court monitor has the authority to investigate, seek information, examine documents, and interview the ward. The court monitor's findings must be reported to the court, and if it appears from the monitor's report that further action by the court is necessary to protect the ward's interests, the court must hold a hearing and enter any order necessary to protect the ward.

In conjunction with the creation of the court monitor system in guardianship proceedings, the Legislature created exemptions from public access to judicial records related to court monitors. This bill is the result of the Legislature's Open Government Sunset Review of the public-records exemptions for orders appointing nonemergency and emergency court monitors, monitors' reports, and orders finding no probable cause in guardianship proceedings.

The bill retains the public-records exemptions and makes organizational changes for clarity. The bill also removes the confidential status of court orders appointing nonemergency court monitors and makes these orders exempt rather than confidential and exempt. In addition, the bill eliminates a reference to "court determinations" in the public-records exemption relating to determinations and orders finding no probable cause for further court action because, in practice, the probable cause determination is typically contained in a written order included in the guardianship file.

These public-records exemptions stand repealed on October 2, 2011, unless the reenactment by the Legislature becomes law.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect October 1, 2011.

Vote Senate 38-0; House 113-0