By Senator Bennett

21-00493-09 2009444

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to title insurance; creating s.

626.8422, F.S.; authorizing a title insurance agent or agency to charge a reasonable fee for certain services; providing that such charges are not part of

the rate charged by the title insurer; requiring that certain information regarding each charge be filed with the Office of Insurance Regulation; requiring that the office publish such information by specified means; prohibiting charges for certain services from being set below the cost to provide such services; amending s. 626.9541, F.S.; deleting certain portions of clarifying language related to the payment of certain portions of premium; prohibiting the payment of any portion of the premium as consideration for the referral of title insurance business; amending s. 627.7711, F.S.; expanding the definition of "premium" to include endorsements, commitments, or other contracts; providing additional exceptions to the

calculation of premium; creating s. 627.7712, F.S.; authorizing a title insurance agent or agency to charge a reasonable fee for certain services; providing that such charges are not part of the rate charged by the title insurer; requiring that certain information regarding each charge be filed with the office; requiring that the office publish such information by specified means; prohibiting charges for certain services from being set below the cost to

scope of the term "premium"; providing a method of

31

32

33

3435

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

4.3

44

45

46

47

48

49 50

51

52

53

5455

56

57

58

21-00493-09 2009444

provide such services; amending s. 627.780, F.S.; prohibiting a person from knowingly quoting, charging, accepting, collecting, or receiving a premium for title insurance other than the premium approved by the office; amending s. 627.782, F.S.; providing for the approval of rates; requiring that each title insurer make an annual filing with the office on or before a specified deadline demonstrating that the rate for such insurance is actuarially sound; prohibiting rates for such filing from including certain charges, commission, or compensation; providing methods by which filing requirements may be satisfied; requiring that the office issue a notice of intent to approve or disapprove the filing on or before a specified deadline; providing that such notice constitutes agency action; providing that requests for supporting information, mathematical or mechanical corrections, or notification of the office's preliminary findings do not toll the deadline date; providing that a rate be deemed approved if the office does not issue the required notice within the specified period; requiring that the office review a rate filing to determine if the rate is excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory; requiring that the office consider certain factors and information when making such review; providing standards upon which a rate may be found excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory; authorizing the office to require an insurer to provide, at the insurer's expense, any

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80 81

82

83 84

85

86

87

21-00493-09 2009444

information necessary to evaluate the condition of the company and reasonableness of the filing; authorizing the office to review certain information at any time; requiring that the office initiate proceedings to disapprove a rate and notify the insurer if the office finds on a preliminary basis that a rate is excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory; requiring that an insurer, upon receipt of such notice from the office, provide certain information within a specified period; requiring that the office issue a notice of intent to approve or a notice of intent to disapprove within a specified period; providing that an insurer has the burden of proof to show by a preponderance of the evidence that a rate is not excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory; prohibiting an insurer from altering a rate after its receipt of notice from the office that a rate may be excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory for a specified period; providing exceptions; authorizing the office to disapprove without notice any rate increase filed by an insurer during the prohibited period; requiring that certain individuals affiliated with a title insurer certify specified information on a form approved by the Financial Services Commission when submitting a rate filing; providing that it is a violation of state law for a certifying officer or actuary to knowingly make a false certification; providing that failure to provide such certification results in a filing being disapproved without

21-00493-09 2009444

prejudice; authorizing an insurer to refile a rate filing under such circumstances; defining the term "actuary"; authorizing an insurer to apply for an extension of time to make a filing under certain circumstances; authorizing the office to exempt a company from filing rates or rate certifications under certain circumstances; authorizing the office to order insurers not meeting certain filing requirements to discontinue the issuance of policies for which the required filing was not made until such time that the office determines that the required filing has been submitted properly; providing for application of an approved rate; authorizing the commission to require by rule that licensees submit certain information determined by the office as necessary to analyze premium rates, retention rates, or the condition of the title insurance industry; authorizing the commission to adopt rules; amending s. 627.7845, F.S.; providing that an insurer is liable to the insured for damages up to three times the amount of coverage under certain conditions; repealing s. 627.783, F.S., relating to rate deviation; providing for application of the act; providing an effective date.

111112

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

9798

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

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

113

Section 1. Section 626.8422, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

116 626.8422 Charges for services.—

21-00493-09 2009444

(1) A title insurance agent or agency may charge a reasonable fee for primary title services, title searches, and closing services or the components thereof actually performed by the agent or agency. Any charges under this section do not constitute a part of the rate charged by the title insurer for the issuance of the title insurance form, policy, commitment, or contract issued in connection therewith. The agent or agency must file with the office the amount of each such charge or change to such charge, including the components thereof, together with related information as required by the office on a form adopted by the office. The office shall publish the information collected from agents or agencies pursuant to this section via the Internet or otherwise as the office deems sufficient to apprise the public of costs for these services among the various agents or agencies.

(2) Charges for the services or components of services described in subsection (1) set by the agent or agency may not be set below the cost to provide such services.

Section 2. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 626.9541, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

626.9541 Unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices defined.—

- (1) UNFAIR METHODS OF COMPETITION AND UNFAIR OR DECEPTIVE ACTS.—The following are defined as unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices:
 - (h) Unlawful rebates.-
- 1. Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, or in an applicable filing with the office, knowingly:
 - a. Permitting, or offering to make, or making, any contract

21-00493-09 2009444

or agreement as to such contract other than as plainly expressed in the insurance contract issued thereon;

- b. Paying, allowing, or giving, or offering to pay, allow, or give, directly or indirectly, as inducement to such insurance contract, any unlawful rebate of premiums payable on the contract, any special favor or advantage in the dividends or other benefits thereon, or any valuable consideration or inducement whatever not specified in the contract;
- c. Giving, selling, or purchasing, or offering to give, sell, or purchase, as inducement to such insurance contract or in connection therewith, any stocks, bonds, or other securities of any insurance company or other corporation, association, or partnership, or any dividends or profits accrued thereon, or anything of value whatsoever not specified in the insurance contract.
- 2. Nothing in paragraph (g) or subparagraph 1. of this paragraph shall be construed as including within the definition of discrimination or unlawful rebates:
- a. In the case of any contract of life insurance or life annuity, paying bonuses to all policyholders or otherwise abating their premiums in whole or in part out of surplus accumulated from nonparticipating insurance; provided that any such bonuses or abatement of premiums is fair and equitable to all policyholders and for the best interests of the company and its policyholders.
- b. In the case of life insurance policies issued on the industrial debit plan, making allowance to policyholders who have continuously for a specified period made premium payments directly to an office of the insurer in an amount which fairly

21-00493-09 2009444

represents the saving in collection expenses.

- c. Readjustment of the rate of premium for a group insurance policy based on the loss or expense thereunder, at the end of the first or any subsequent policy year of insurance thereunder, which may be made retroactive only for such policy year.
- d. Issuance of life insurance policies or annuity contracts at rates less than the usual rates of premiums for such policies or contracts, as group insurance or employee insurance as defined in this code.
- e. Issuing life or disability insurance policies on a salary savings, bank draft, preauthorized check, payroll deduction, or other similar plan at a reduced rate reasonably related to the savings made by the use of such plan.
- 3.a. No title insurer, or any member, employee, attorney, agent, or agency thereof, shall pay, allow, or give, or offer to pay, allow, or give, directly or indirectly, as inducement to title insurance, or after such insurance has been effected, any rebate or abatement of the premium or any other charge or fee, or provide any special favor or advantage, or any monetary consideration or inducement whatever.
- b. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed as prohibiting the payment of fees to attorneys at law, duly licensed to practice law in the courts of this state, for professional services, or as prohibiting the payment of earned portions of the premium to duly appointed agents or agencies who actually perform services for the title insurer. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed as prohibiting a rebate or abatement of an attorney's fee charged for professional

21-00493-09 2009444

services, or that portion of the premium that is not required to be retained by the insurer pursuant to s. 627.782(1), or any other agent charge or fee to the person responsible for paying the premium, charge, or fee.

c. No insured named in a policy, or any other person directly or indirectly connected with the transaction involving the issuance of such policy, including, but not limited to, any mortgage broker, real estate broker, builder, or attorney, any employee, agent, agency, or representative thereof, or any other person whatsoever, shall knowingly receive or accept, directly or indirectly, any rebate or abatement of any portion of the title insurance premium or of any other charge or fee or any monetary consideration or inducement whatsoever, except as set forth in sub-subparagraph b.; provided, in no event shall any portion of the attorney's fee, any portion of the premium that is not required to be retained by the insurer pursuant to s. 627.782(1), any agent charge or fee, or any other monetary consideration or inducement be paid directly or indirectly for the referral of title insurance business.

Section 3. Subsection (2) of section 627.7711, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

627.7711 Definitions.—As used in this part, the term:

(2) "Premium" means the charge, as specified by rule of the commission, that is made by a title insurer for a title insurance policy, endorsement, commitment, or other contract for including the charge for performance of primary title services by a title insurer or title insurance agent or agency, and incurring the risks incident to the such policy, endorsement, commitment, or other contract under the several classifications

21-00493-09 2009444

of title insurance contracts and forms, and upon which charge a premium tax is paid under s. 624.509. As used in this part or in any other law, with respect to title insurance, the word "premium" does not include a commission or any reimbursement for primary title services, title searches, closing services, or any component thereof performed by a title insurer, title insurance agent, or agency. The premium shall be calculated by multiplying the approved rate by each \$1,000 of title insurance limits provided.

Section 4. Section 627.7712, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

627.7712 Charges for services.-

- (1) A title insurance agent or agency may charge a reasonable fee for primary title services, title searches, and closing services or the components thereof actually performed by the agent or agency. Any charges under this section do not constitute a part of the rate charged by the title insurer for the issuance of the title insurance form, policy, commitment, or contract issued in connection therewith. The agent or agency must file with the office the amount of each such charge or change to such charge, including the components thereof, together with related information as required by the office on a form adopted by the office. The office shall publish the information collected from agents or agencies pursuant to this section via the Internet or otherwise as the office deems sufficient to apprise the public of costs for these services among the various agents or agencies.
- (2) Charges for the services or components of services described in subsection (1) set by the agent or agency may not

2.82

21-00493-09 2009444

262 be set below the cost to provide such services.

Section 5. Subsection (1) of section 627.780, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

627.780 Illegal dealings in premium.-

(1) A person may not knowingly quote, charge, accept, collect, or receive a premium for title insurance other than the premium approved by the office adopted by the commission, except as provided in s. 626.9541(1)(h)3.b.

Section 6. Section 627.782, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

- 627.782 Approval Adoption of rates.
- (1) Each title insurer shall make an annual filing with the office no later than 12 months after the date of that insurer's previous filing which demonstrates that the rate is actuarially sound. Rates for the required filing may not include any charge for primary title services, closing services, or title searches as defined in s. 627.7711 or any commission or other compensation made to title agents or agencies.
- (a) The filing requirements of this section shall be satisfied by one of the following methods:
- 1. A rate filing prepared by an actuary containing documentation demonstrating that the proposed rates are not excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory pursuant to applicable rating laws and rules of the commission.
- 2. If no rate change is proposed, a filing consisting of a certification by an actuary that the existing rate is actuarially sound and not excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory.
 - (b) The office shall finalize its review by issuing a

21-00493-09 2009444

notice of intent to approve or a notice of intent to disapprove within 90 days after the date of its receipt of the filing. The notice of intent to approve and the notice of intent to disapprove constitute agency action for purposes of chapter 120. Requests for supporting information, requests for mathematical or mechanical corrections, or notification to the insurer by the office of its preliminary findings do not toll the 90-day period during any such proceeding. The rate shall be deemed approved if the office does not issue a notice of intent to approve or a notice of intent to disapprove within 90 days after the date of its receipt of the filing.

- (c) Upon receipt of a rate filing, the office shall review the rate filing to determine if the rate is excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory. The office shall, in accordance with generally accepted and reasonable actuarial principles and techniques, consider the following factors when making such determination:
- 1. Each title insurer's loss experience and prospective loss experience within and without this state under closing protection letters, policies, endorsements, commitments, and other contracts and policy liabilities.
- 2. A reasonable margin for profit and contingencies, including contingent liability under s. 627.7865, sufficient to allow title insurers to earn a rate of return on their capital which will attract and retain adequate capital investment in the title insurance business and maintain an efficient title insurance delivery system.
- 3. Past expenses and prospective expenses for the administration and handling of risks.

21-00493-09 2009444

- 4. Liability for defalcation.
- 5. The degree of competition among insurers for the risk insured.
- 6. Investment income reasonably expected by the insurer, consistent with the insurer's investment practices, from premiums anticipated in the filing, plus any other expected income from currently invested assets representing the amount expected on unearned premium reserves and loss reserves. The commission may adopt rules using reasonable techniques of actuarial science and economics to specify the manner in which insurers must calculate investment income attributable to such classes of insurance written in this state and the manner in which such investment income must be used in the calculation of insurance rates. The manner of calculation shall contemplate allowances for a profit factor and investment income that produce a reasonable rate of return; however, investment income from invested surplus must not be considered.
- 7. The reasonableness of the judgment reflected in the filing.
- 8. Dividends, savings, or unabsorbed premium deposits allowed or returned to Florida policyholders, members, or subscribers.
 - 9. The adequacy of loss reserves.
 - 10. The cost of reinsurance.
- 11. Trend factors, including trends in actual losses per insured unit for the insurer making the filing.
- 12. Other relevant factors that affect the frequency or severity of claims or expenses.
 - (d) After consideration of the rate factors provided in

21-00493-09 2009444

paragraph (c), a rate may be found by the office to be excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory based upon the following standards:

- 1. Rates shall be deemed excessive if they are likely to produce a profit from Florida business which is unreasonably high in relation to the risk involved in the class of business or if expenses are unreasonably high in relation to services rendered.
- 2. Rates shall be deemed excessive if, among other things, the rate structure established by a title insurer provides for replenishment of surpluses from premiums if the replenishment is necessitated by investment losses.
- 3. Rates shall be deemed inadequate if the rates and the investment income attributable to them are clearly insufficient to sustain projected losses and expenses in the class of business to which they apply.
- (e) In reviewing a rate filing, the office may require the insurer to provide, at the insurer's expense, all information necessary to evaluate the condition of the company and the reasonableness of the filing according to the criteria enumerated in this section.
- (f) The office may at any time review a rate, rating schedule, rating manual, or rate change; the pertinent records of the insurer; and market conditions. If the office finds on a preliminary basis that a rate may be excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory, the office shall initiate proceedings to disapprove the rate and shall notify the insurer. Upon being notified, the insurer shall, within 60 days, file with the office all information that, in the belief of the insurer,

379

380

381

382 383

384

385

386

387

388

389

390

391

392

393

394

395

396

397

398

399

400

401

402

403

404

405

406

21-00493-09 2009444

proves the reasonableness, adequacy, and fairness of the rate or rate change. The office shall issue a notice of intent to approve or a notice of intent to disapprove pursuant to the procedures of paragraph (b) within 90 days after the date of its receipt of the insurer's initial response. In such instances and in any administrative proceeding relating to the legality of the rate, the insurer has the burden of proof to show by a preponderance of the evidence that the rate is not excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory. After the office notifies an insurer that a rate may be excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory, unless the office withdraws the notification, the insurer may not alter the rate except to conform with the office's notice until the earlier of 120 days after the date the notification was provided or 180 days after the date of the implementation of the rate. The office may, subject to chapter 120, disapprove without the required 60-day notification any rate increase filed by an insurer within the prohibited period or during the time that the legality of the increased rate is being contested.

- (g) When submitting a rate filing, the chief executive officer or the chief financial officer of the title insurer and the chief actuary of the title insurer must certify the following information on a form approved by the commission, under oath, and subject to penalty of perjury:
- 1. The signing officer and actuary have reviewed the rate filing;
- 2. Based on the knowledge of the signing officer and actuary, the rate filing does not contain any untrue statement of a material fact or omit a material fact necessary to make the

21-00493-09 2009444

statements not misleading, in light of the circumstances under which such statements were made;

- 3. Based on the knowledge of the signing officer and actuary, the information and other factors described in this section, including, but not limited to, investment income, present the basis of the rate filing in all material respects for the periods presented in the filing; and
- 4. Based on the knowledge of the signing officer and actuary, the rate filing reflects all premium savings that are reasonably expected to result from legislative enactments and are in accordance with generally accepted and reasonable actuarial techniques.

A signing officer or actuary who knowingly makes a false certification under this subsection commits a violation of s. 626.9541(1)(e) and is subject to the penalties prescribed in s. 626.9521. Failure to provide such certification by the officer and actuary shall result in the rate filing being disapproved without prejudice. Under such circumstances, the insurer or rating organization may refile its rate filing with the required certification. As used in this paragraph, the term "actuary" means an individual who is a member of the Casualty Actuary Society or the American Academy of Actuaries.

(h) If, at the time a filing is required under this section, an insurer is in the process of completing a rate review, the insurer may apply to the office for an extension of up to an additional 30 days to make the filing. The request for an extension must be received by the office no later than the date the filing is due.

21-00493-09 2009444

(i) After receiving a request to be exempted from the provisions of this section before the filing is due, the office may, due to insignificant numbers of policies in force or insignificant premium volume, exempt a company from filing rates or rate certification as required by this section.

- (j) If an insurer fails to meet the filing requirements of this subsection and does not submit the filing within 60 days following the date on which the filing is due, the office may, in addition to any other penalty authorized by law, order the insurer to discontinue the issuance of policies for which the required filing was not made until such time that the office determines that the required filing has been submitted properly.
- (1) Subject to the rating provisions of this code, the commission must adopt a rule specifying the premium to be charged in this state by title insurers for the respective types of title insurance contracts and, for policies issued through agents or agencies, the percentage of such premium required to be retained by the title insurer which shall not be less than 30 percent. However, in a transaction subject to the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act of 1974, 12 U.S.C. ss. 2601 et seq., as amended, no portion of the premium attributable to providing a primary title service shall be paid to or retained by any person who does not actually perform or is not liable for the performance of such service.
- (2) In adopting premium rates, the commission must give due consideration to the following:
- (a) The title insurers' loss experience and prospective loss experience under closing protection letters and policy liabilities.

21-00493-09 2009444

(b) A reasonable margin for underwriting profit and contingencies, including contingent liability under s. 627.7865, sufficient to allow title insurers, agents, and agencies to earn a rate of return on their capital that will attract and retain adequate capital investment in the title insurance business and maintain an efficient title insurance delivery system.

- (c) Past expenses and prospective expenses for administration and handling of risks.
 - (d) Liability for defalcation.
 - (e) Other relevant factors.
- (3) Rates may be grouped by classification or schedule and may differ as to class of risk assumed.
- (4) Rates may not be excessive, inadequate, or unfairly discriminatory.
- (2) (5) The approved rate premium applies to each \$100 of insurance issued to an insured.
- (3) (6) The approved rate applies premium rates apply throughout this state.
- (7) The commission shall, in accordance with the standards provided in subsection (2), review the premium as needed, but not less frequently than once every 3 years, and shall, based upon the review required by this subsection, revise the premium if the results of the review so warrant.
- (4) (8) The commission may, by rule, require licensees under this part to annually submit statistical information, including loss and expense data, as the office department determines to be necessary to analyze premium rates, retention rates, and the condition of the title insurance industry.
 - (5) The commission may establish procedures for the

21-00493-09 2009444

494 required filings by rule.

Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 627.7845, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

627.7845 Determination of insurability required; preservation of evidence of title search and examination.—

(1) A title insurer may not issue a title insurance commitment, endorsement, or title insurance policy until the title insurer has caused to be made a determination of insurability based upon the evaluation of a reasonable title search or a search of the records of a Uniform Commercial Code filing office, as applicable, has examined such other information as may be necessary, and has caused to be made a determination of insurability of title or the existence, attachments, perfection, and priority of a Uniform Commercial Code security interest, including endorsement coverages, in accordance with sound underwriting practices. If an insurer or its agent is negligent in performing the activities required in this subsection, the insurer is liable to the insured for damages up to three times the amount of coverage.

Section 8. Section 627.783, Florida Statutes, is repealed. Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009, and applies to title insurance forms, contracts, commitments, or policies issued on or after that date.