

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 Committee on Banking and Insurance

BILL: SPB 7056

INTRODUCER: Banking and Insurance Committee

SUBJECT: OGSR/Family Trust Companies/Office of Financial Regulation

DATE: February 19, 2019

REVISED: _____

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Billmeier	Knudson		BI Submitted as Comm. Bill/Fav

I. Summary:

SPB 7056 is based on an Open Government Sunset Review of a public records exemption for certain information relating to family trust companies held by the Office of Financial Regulation. Family trust companies provide trust company services to high net worth families. They are not allowed to provide services to the general public. The Office of Financial Regulation's regulatory role is limited to ensuring that fiduciary services are not provided to the general public unless the family trust company desires more regulation.

Section 662.148, F.S., provides that personal identifying information contained in family trust company applications, registrations, certifications, and examinations is confidential and exempt from public disclosure. It also provides that family trust company shareholder or member names are confidential and exempt.

The Legislature made such personal identifying information confidential and exempt because disclosure of financial information and names of family members, qualified participants, and shareholders of family trust companies could jeopardize the financial safety of the family members. Families with a high net worth are frequently the targets of criminals and placing family personal identifying information into the public domain would increase the risk that a family could become the target of criminal activity.

The exemption is scheduled for repeal on October 2, 2019. This bill makes the exemption permanent.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records Law

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.¹ This applies to the official business

¹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, including all three branches of state government, local governmental entities, and any person acting on behalf of the government.² In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes provide that the public may access legislative and executive branch records.³ Chapter 119, F.S., constitutes the main body of public records laws, and is known as the Public Records Act.⁴ The Public Records Act states that

[i]t is the policy of this state that all state, county and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person. Providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.⁵

According to the Public Records Act, a public record includes virtually any document or recording, regardless of its physical form or how it may be transmitted.⁶ The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted public records as being “any material prepared in connection with official agency business which is intended to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge of some type.”⁷ A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.⁸

The Legislature may create an exemption to public records requirements by passing a general law by a two-thirds vote of each of the House and the Senate.⁹ The exemption must explicitly lay out the public necessity justifying the exemption, and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.¹⁰ A statutory exemption which does not meet these two criteria may be unconstitutional and may not be judicially saved.¹¹

² *Id.*

³ The Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records. *Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So.2d 32 (Fla. 1992). Also see *Times Pub. Co. v. Ake*, 660 So.2d 255 (Fla. 1995). The Legislature’s records are public pursuant to s. 11.0431, F.S. Public records exemptions for the Legislature are primarily located in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S.

⁴ Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes.

⁵ Section 119.01(1), F.S.

⁶ Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public record” to mean “all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.” Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” as “any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.”

⁷ *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc. Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

⁸ Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are the penalties for violating those laws.

⁹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. New-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999). In *Halifax Hospital*, the Florida Supreme Court found that a public meetings exemption was unconstitutional because the statement of public necessity did not define important terms and did not justify the breadth of the exemption. *Id.* at 570. The Florida Supreme Court also declined to narrow the exemption in order to save it. *Id.* In *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So.2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004), the court found that the intent of a public records statute was to create a public records exemption. The *Baker County Press* court found that since the law did not contain a public necessity statement, it was unconstitutional. *Id.* at 196.

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is ‘confidential and exempt’ or ‘exempt.’¹² Records designated as ‘confidential and exempt’ may be released by the records custodian only under the circumstances defined by the Legislature. Records designated as ‘exempt’ may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.¹³

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (OGSR) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or open meetings exemptions.¹⁴ The OGSR provides that an exemption automatically repeals on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment; in order to save an exemption from repeal, the Legislature must reenact the exemption or repeal the sunset date.¹⁵ In practice, many exemptions are continued by repealing the sunset date rather than reenacting the exemption.

The OGSR provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary.¹⁶ An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if it meets one of the following purposes *and* the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

- It allows the state or its political subdivision to effectively and efficiently administer a program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;¹⁷
- Releasing sensitive personal information would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual’s safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;¹⁸ or
- It protects trade or business secrets.¹⁹

The OGSR also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.²⁰ In examining an exemption, the OGSR asks the Legislature to carefully question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

¹² If the Legislature designates a record as confidential, such record may not be released to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. *WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

¹³ *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 683 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

¹⁴ Section 119.15, F.S. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S., provides that an exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more records or information or to include meetings. The OGSR does not apply to an exemption that is required by federal law or that applies solely to the Legislature or the State Court System pursuant to s. 119.15(2), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁸ Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

¹⁹ Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

²⁰ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

- What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
- Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
- What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
- Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means? If so, how?
- Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?

If, in reenacting an exemption or repealing the sunset date, the exemption is expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.²¹ If the exemption is reenacted or saved from repeal without substantive changes or if the exemption is narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to sunset, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless provided for by law.²²

The Family Trust Company

A family trust company provides trust services to wealthy families and cannot provide services to the general public. These services include serving as a trustee of trusts held for the benefit of the family members, as well as providing other fiduciary, investment advisory, wealth management, and administrative services to the family. A family might wish to form a family trust company in order to keep family matters more private than they would be if turned over to an independent trustee, to gain liability protection, to establish its own trust fee structure, and to obtain tax advantages. Traditional trust companies require regulatory oversight, licensing of investment personnel, public disclosure and capitalization requirements considered by practitioners to be overbroad and intrusive for the family trust.

In 2014, the Legislature authorized the creation of family trust companies in Florida.²³ The Florida Family Trust Company Act is codified in chapter 662, F.S. The Act allows for the creation of family trust companies in Florida and provides differing degrees of regulatory oversight by the Office of Financial Regulation (OFR).

Chapter 662, F.S., creates three types of family trust companies: family trust companies, licensed family trust companies, and foreign licensed family trust companies. A “family trust company” is a corporation or limited liability company that is exclusively owned by one or more family member and acts or proposes to act as a fiduciary to serve one or more family members.²⁴ A “licensed family trust company” means a family trust company that has been issued a license that has not been revoked or suspended by the OFR.²⁵ A “foreign licensed family trust company” means a family trust company that is licensed by a state other than Florida.²⁶ Family trust companies that are not licensed and foreign family trust companies must register annually with the OFR.²⁷

A licensed family trust company is subject to regulation by the OFR, including examinations and investigations.²⁸ If a family trust company is not licensed or is a foreign family trust company,

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- Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

²¹ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

²² Section 119.15(7), F.S.

²³ Ch. 2014-97, Laws of Fla.

²⁴ See s. 662.111(12), F.S. and does not serve as a fiduciary for a person, entity, trust, or estate that is not a family member, except that it may serve as a fiduciary for up to 35 individuals who are not family members if the individuals are current or former employees of the family trust company or one or more trusts, companies, or other entities that are family members

²⁵ See s. 662.111(16), F.S.

²⁶ See s. 662.111(15), F.S.

²⁷ See ss. 662.122, 662.128, F.S.

²⁸ See s. 662.141, F.S.

the OFR role is limited to ensuring fiduciary services are not provided to the general public and are restricted to family members.²⁹

There are no licensed family trust companies in Florida. There are ten registered family trust companies in Florida. The OFR has identified one public records request relating to family trust companies in 2018, two requests in 2017, two requests in 2016, and one request in 2014. The OFR responded to each request by redacting confidential and exempt information.³⁰

Public Records Exemption

Section 662.148, F.S., provides that the following information in records relating to family trust companies held by the OFR are confidential and exempt from public disclosure:

- Personal identifying information appearing in records relating to a registration, an application, or an annual certification.
- Personal identifying information appearing in records relating to an examination.
- Personal identifying information appearing in reports of examinations, operations, or conditions of trust companies.
- Personal identifying information appearing in working papers held by the OFR.
- Any portion of a list of names of the shareholders or members.
- Information received from a person from another state or nation or the federal government which is otherwise confidential or exempt pursuant to the laws of that state or nation or pursuant to federal law.
- Emergency cease and desist orders. However, an emergency cease and desist order may be made public if it is made permanent or if continued confidentially will place the public at substantial risk of financial loss.

Subsection 662.148(3), F.S., provides that the OFR may disclose confidential and exempt information relating to family trust companies to the following:

- An authorized representative of a trust company during an examination.
- A fidelity insurance company, upon written consent of a trust company.
- An independent auditor, upon written consent of a trust company.
- A liquidator, receiver, or conservator for a trust company. However, any information which discloses the identity of a bondholder, customer, family member, member, or stockholder must be redacted by the OFR before being released.
- Any other state, federal, or foreign agency responsible for the regulation or supervision of a trust company.
- A law enforcement agency in the furtherance of the agency's official duties or for the purpose of reporting suspected criminal activity.
- A prosecutorial agency for the purpose of reporting suspected criminal activity.
- A legislative body or committee pursuant to a legislative subpoena. The legislative body or committee must maintain the confidentiality of the records it receives, except in cases involving a public official who is subject to impeachment or removal.

²⁹ See s. 662.102(3)(b), F.S.

³⁰ Letter from the Office of Financial Regulation to Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance Staff dated August 23, 2018 (on file with the Senate Committee on Banking and Insurance).

The exemption does not prevent or restrict the publication of a report required by federal law, nor does this bill prevent or restrict the publication of a trust company's name, or the name and address of its registered agent.³¹

Public Necessity Statement

The Legislature found that the exemption is necessary because:

- Financial information and lists of names of family members, qualified participants, and shareholders, if available for public access could jeopardize the financial safety of the family members who are the subject of the information. Families with a high net worth are frequently the targets of criminal predators seeking access to their assets. It is important that the exposure of such families and family members to threats of extortion, kidnapping, and other crimes not be increased. Placing family names, private family business records and methodologies into the public domain would increase the security risk that a family could become the target of criminal activity.
- Public disclosure of an examination, report of examination, or emergency cease and desist order could expose families to security risks, and could defame or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of the family that is the subject of the information.
- Family trust companies often provide a consolidated structure for the ownership of an operating business owned by multiple family members. Placing those private business operations and methods in the public domain could jeopardize their business assets, methodologies, and practices.³²

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill is based on an Open Government Sunset Review of section 662.148, F.S. Section 662.148, F.S., provides that certain personal identifying information relating to family trust companies held by the OFR is confidential and exempt from disclosure. The Legislature found that the exemption is necessary to protect families from criminal activity, to avoid unnecessary embarrassment to families, and to avoid exposing family business practices to the public. The public records exemption is scheduled to repeal on October 2, 2019. This bill deletes the scheduled repeal of the exemption. If the bill passes, the exemption would be permanent. The bill takes effect October 1, 2018

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

³¹ See s. 662.148(4), F.S.

³² See ch. 2014-102, L.O.F.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 662.148 of the Florida Statutes:

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.