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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AS REVISED BY THE
COUNCIL FOR SMARTER GOVERNMENT
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 385 (PCB SA 01-02)
RELATING TO: Public Records Exemption for Certain Information Used by Municipally Owned Utilities
SPONSOR(S): Committee on State Administration and Representative(s) Brummer
TIED BILL(S): None

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) STATE ADMINISTRATION YEAS 5 NAYS 0
 - (2) COUNCIL FOR SMARTER GOVERNMENT YEAS 10 NAYS 0
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
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I. SUMMARY:

The Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995 provides that an exemption from the requirements of the public records or public meetings laws may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and may be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves.

Further, the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995 sets forth a review process which requires that on October 2nd in the fifth year after enactment of a new exemption or "substantial amendment" of an existing exemption, the exemption is to repeal, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption. By June, of the year before the repeal of an exemption, the Division of Statutory Revision of the Office of Legislative Services must certify, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the language that will repeal and the statutory citation for each exemption scheduled for repeal.

Section 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., provides that "any data, record, or document used directly or solely by a municipally owned utility" to prepare a bid relative to a customer or prospective customer's property is exempt from public disclosure. This section was certified by the Division of Statutory Revision and will repeal on October 2, 2001, unless otherwise reenacted by the Legislature.

This bill reenacts this exemption verbatim. The language directing the repeal of the exemption is removed. The purpose of this exemption is to allow municipal utilities to compete fairly with private competitors in responding to invitations to bid and similar solicitations for services, commodities or tangible property. If this exemption was repealed, then information would be released that would give the private sector utilities an unfair advantage over public utilities in the bidding process.

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

Public Records Law

Florida Constitution

Article I, s. 24(a), Florida Constitution, expresses Florida's public policy regarding access to government records as follows:

Every person has the right to inspect or copy any public records made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or persons acting on their behalf, except with respect to records exempted pursuant to this section or specifically made confidential by this Constitution. This section specifically includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and each agency or department created thereunder; counties, municipalities, and districts; and each constitutional officer, board, and commission, or entity created pursuant to law or this Constitution.

Article I, s. 24(c), Florida Constitution, does, however, permit the Legislature to provide by general law for the exemption of records from the requirements of s. 24. The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption (public necessity statement) and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.

Article I, s. 24, Florida Constitution, does not set forth any repeal or review requirements.

Florida Statutes

Public policy regarding access to government records is also addressed in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S., provides:

Every person who has custody of a public record shall permit the record to be inspected and examined by any person desiring to do so, at a reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record or the custodian's designee.

Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995

Section 119.15, F.S., the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995, provides that an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and may be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption meets one of the following purposes, and the Legislature finds that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

1. Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
2. Protects information of a sensitive personal nature concerning individuals, the release of which information would be defamatory to such individuals or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of such individuals or would jeopardize the safety of such individuals. However, in exemptions under this subparagraph, only information that would identify the individuals may be exempted; or
3. Protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, including, but not limited to, a formula, pattern, device, combination of devices, or compilation of information which is used to protect or further a business advantage over those who do not know or use it, the disclosure of which information would injure the affected entity in the marketplace.

Section 119.15, F.S., sets forth a review process which requires that on October 2nd in the fifth year after enactment of a new exemption or "substantial amendment"¹ of an existing exemption, the exemption is to repeal, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption. By June, of the year before the repeal of an exemption, the Division of Statutory Revision of the Office of Legislative Services must certify, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the language that will repeal and the statutory citation for each exemption scheduled for repeal. s. 119.15(3)(d), F.S.

Section 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., was certified by the Division of Statutory Revision and will repeal on October 2, 2001, unless otherwise reenacted by the Legislature.

Analytical Framework

The Florida Constitution does not require the repeal, review, or reenactment of exemptions; the Open Government Sunset Review Act (s. 119.15, F.S.) does. However, the Open Government Sunset Review Act is a Florida statutory provision created by the Legislature. Accordingly, because one Legislature cannot bind another, the requirements of s. 119.15, F.S., do not have to be met.² Nonetheless, because the certified exemption as found in the Florida Statutes actually contains language that repeals the exemption as of October 2nd, 2001, that exemption *will* repeal unless the legislature reenacts the exemption.³

¹ An exemption is "substantially amended" if the amendment **expands** the scope of the exemption to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. An exemption is not substantially amended if the amendment narrows the scope of the exemption. s. 119.15(3)(b), F.S.

² The requirements of Article 1, s. 24(c), Florida Constitution, must, however, be met with regard to any exemption created on or after July 1, 1993. See *infra* [Florida Constitution](#).

³ Please note that the effective date of this bill is prior to the repeal date of October 2, 2001.

If, and only if, in reenacting an exemption that will repeal, the exemption is expanded (essentially creating a new exemption), then a public necessity statement is required, as a result of the requirements of Article 1, s. 24, Florida Constitution. If the exemption is reenacted with grammatical or stylistic changes (that do not expand the exemption), if the exemption is narrowed, or if an exception to the exemption is created (e.g., allowing another agency access to the exempt records), then a public necessity statement is not required. Article 1, s. 24, Florida Constitution, only requires a public necessity statement when creating an exemption, and also requires that the exemption be in a separate bill.⁴

Section 119.07(3)(aa), F.S.

Section 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., was enacted in 1996 in Chapter 96-230, Laws of Florida. The section states:

Any data, record, or document used directly or solely by a municipally owned utility to prepare and submit a bid relative to the sale, distribution, or use of any service, commodity, or tangible personal property to any customer or prospective customer shall be exempt from the provisions of subsection (1) and s. 24 (a), Art. I of the State Constitution. This exemption commences when a municipal utility identifies in writing a specific bid to which it intends to respond. This exemption no longer applies when the contract for sale, distribution, or use of the service, commodity, or tangible personal property is executed, a decision is made not to execute such contract, or the project is no longer under active consideration. The exemption in this paragraph includes the bid documents actually furnished in response to the request for bids. However, the exemption for the bid documents submitted no longer applies after the bids are opened by the customer or prospective customer. This paragraph is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995 in accordance with s. 119.15, and shall stand repealed on October 2, 2001, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

The stated public purpose served by the public records exemption is to allow municipal utilities to compete fairly with private competitors in responding to invitations to bid and similar solicitations for services, commodities or tangible property. In addition, the Legislature, in its public necessity statement, as required by Art. I, S. 24 of the Florida Constitution, made the specific finding in Section 2 of Chapter 96-230, Laws of Florida,

that the exemption . . . is necessary in order to allow public agencies to compete fairly with private entities in responding to invitations to bid and other similar solicitations for services, commodities, or tangible property. The Legislature additionally finds that opening the confidential records, bids, and related documents for public inspection after the contract is executed or a decision is made not to execute the contract allows sufficient public access to satisfy the requirements of law and the State Constitution.

As provided by its terms, and according to the provisions of the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995 , s. 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., is subject to repeal on October 2, 2001, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

In Interim Project Report 2001-041, the Senate Committee on Comprehensive Planning, Local and Military Affairs determined that the current public records exemption in s.

⁴ If various exemptions are reenacted that do not expand the exemption, then there is no requirement that the exemptions be in separate bills; provided however, that the bill containing the reenactments meets the single subject requirement.

119.07(3)(aa), F.S., for information and documents associated with municipal utility bids to provide services, is necessary to allow municipal utilities to compete on a level playing field with private utilities in responding to invitations to bid. The exemption appears to be narrowly drawn to limit the duration of the exemption so that the exemption expires when: the bids are opened by the customer or potential customer; a decision is made not to execute a contract to provide the service or commodity; or, the project is no longer under consideration. Accordingly, members of the public, competitors and others ultimately have access to the information used by the municipal utility to prepare and submit a bid.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill amends s. 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., to remove the sentence that requires its repeal. This bill, further, reenacts verbatim the public records exemption in s. 119.07(3)(aa), F.S., which provides that "any data, record, or document used directly or solely by a municipal owned utility" to prepare a bid relative to a customer or prospective customer's property is exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

See "Effect of Proposed Changes."

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

None.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON STATE ADMINISTRATION:

Prepared by:

Jennifer D. Krell, J.D.

Staff Director:

J. Marleen Ahearn, J.D., Ph.D.

AS REVISED BY THE COUNCIL FOR SMARTER GOVERNMENT:

Prepared by:

Jennifer D. Krell, J.D.

Staff Director:

Don Rubottom