

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 1928

SPONSOR: Commerce, Economic Opportunities, and Consumer Services Committee and
Senator Atwater

SUBJECT: Unlawful Use of a Recording Device in a Motion Picture Theater

DATE: March 10, 2004 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Gillespie	Maclure	CM	Favorable/CS
2.			CJ	
3.			JU	
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1928 prohibits a person from knowingly operating the audiovisual recording function of any device in a motion picture theater, while a motion picture is being exhibited, without the express written consent of the theater owner. The committee substitute specifies that violations are a felony of third degree, punishable by up to 5 years in prison or by a fine of up to \$25,000, or both. The committee substitute also provides an exemption from these criminal offenses for certain law enforcement officials under specified conditions.

The committee substitute authorizes the theater owner to detain a person who the theater owner believes in good faith has committed a violation. The committee substitute grants the theater owner with qualified immunity from civil actions arising out of measures taken to detain offenders while awaiting the arrival of a law enforcement officer, if the offenders are detained in a reasonable manner for a reasonable time.

This committee substitute creates an unnumbered section of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Unauthorized Recording of Motion Pictures

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) estimates that the motion picture industry in the United States loses more than \$3 billion annually in potential worldwide revenue due to

the unauthorized recording of motion pictures.¹ One of the methods used to create unauthorized recordings is commonly cited as “camcording.” Camcording entails the use of a hand-held video camera to record a motion picture film off the theater screen and then copy the film onto blank videocassettes or optical discs for distribution.

Federal Offenses for Copyright Infringement

Under federal law, a person infringes a copyright if the person violates any of the exclusive rights of the copyright owner (17 U.S.C. s. 501(a)). These exclusive rights of a copyrighted work include, for example, the right to reproduce and distribute copies of the work, the right to prepare derivative works, and the right to display or perform the work publicly (17 U.S.C. s. 106).

Federal law imposes criminal penalties upon a person who willfully infringes a copyright by the reproduction or distribution of copyrighted works (17 U.S.C. s. 506(a)(2)). A violation involving the reproduction or distribution of at least 10 copies of one or more copyrighted works during any 180-day period, which have a total retail value of \$2,500 or more, is punishable by up to 3 years in federal prison and up to a \$250,000 fine (18 U.S.C. s. 2319(c) and s. 3571(b)). A second or subsequent offense is punishable by up to 6 years in federal prison. Lesser violations involving the reproduction or distribution of at least one copy of one or more copyrighted works during any 180-day period, which have a total retail value of more than \$1,000, are punishable by up to 1 year in federal prison and up to a \$100,000 fine.

In addition, federal law imposes enhanced criminal penalties upon a person who willfully infringes a copyright for purposes of commercial advantage or private financial gain (17 U.S.C. s. 506(a)(1)). A violation involving the reproduction or distribution of at least 10 copies of one or more copyrighted works during any 180-day period, which have a total retail value of more than \$2,500, is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and up to a \$250,000 fine (18 U.S.C. s. 2319(b) and s. 3571(b)). A second or subsequent offense is punishable by up to 10 years in federal prison. Lesser violations are punishable by up to 1 year in federal prison and up to a \$100,000 fine.

Federal Preemption of State Laws on Copyright Infringement

In 1978, the United States Congress preempted state laws governing “all legal or equitable rights” that are equivalent to the exclusive rights within the general scope of copyright (e.g., rights to reproduce and distribute work, prepare derivative works, and display or perform the work publicly) and that come within the subject matter of copyright (17 U.S.C. s. 301). Accordingly, federal law essentially precludes states from enforcing penalties for copyright violations and requires, in most instances, criminal prosecution for copyright infringement under federal law.²

¹ Motion Picture Association of America, *Anti-Piracy*, at <http://www.mpaa.org/anti-piracy> (last visited Mar. 10, 2004).

² U.S. Dept. of Justice, *Federal Prosecution of Violations of Intellectual Property Rights* 50, available at http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/intell_prop_rts/SectIII.htm#III (last visited Mar. 10, 2004); see, e.g., *People v. Borriello*, 155 Misc. 2d 261, 588 N.Y.S.2d 991 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1992); *Gemcraft Homes, Inc. v. Sumurdy*, 688 F. Supp. 289 (E.D. Tex. 1988).

Taking Offenders into Custody

Under Florida law, a law enforcement officer, a merchant, a farmer, or a transit agency's employee or agent may take an offender into custody and detain the offender in a reasonable manner for a reasonable length of time, if:

- There is probable cause that a retail theft, farm theft, transit fare evasion, trespass, or unlawful use or attempted use of any antishoplifting or inventory control device countermeasure has been committed by the offender;
- In the case of retail or farm theft, the property can be recovered by taking the offender into custody;
- In the case of a farmer, the taking of the offender into custody is effectuated only on property owned or leased by the farmer; and
- The offender is detained for the purpose of attempting to recover the property or for prosecution (s. 812.015(3)(a), F.S.).

Immediately after the offender has been taken into custody, a law enforcement officer must be called to the scene.

If the offender is taken into custody and detained in accordance with the law, current law grants a law enforcement officer, merchant, merchant's employee, farmer, or transit agency's employee or agent with immunity from criminal or civil liability for false arrest, false imprisonment, or unlawful detention (s. 812.015(3)(c), F.S.).

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Criminal Penalty for Unauthorized Recording in Motion Picture Theater

The committee substitute prohibits a person from knowingly operating the audiovisual recording function³ of any device in a motion picture theater,⁴ while a motion picture is being exhibited, without the express written consent of the theater owner or the owner's employee or agent. The committee substitute specifies that violations are a felony of third degree, punishable by up to 5 years in prison or by a fine of up to \$25,000, or both.

Exemption for Law Enforcement Officials

The committee substitute exempts from being subject to the criminal penalties the employees or agents of an investigative agency, law enforcement agency, protective services agency, or intelligence-gathering agency operating an audiovisual recording device in a motion picture theater as part of a lawfully authorized investigation.

³ The bill defines an "audiovisual recording function" as the capability of a camera, an audio or video recorder, or any other device to record, transfer sounds or images, or transmit a motion picture or any part thereof by means of any technology now known or later development.

⁴ The bill defines a "motion picture theater" as a movie theater, screening room, or other venue when used primarily for the exhibition of a motion picture.

Immunity for Taking Offenders into Custody

The committee substitute authorizes the theater owner to detain a person who the theater owner believes in good faith has knowingly operated an audiovisual recording device in the theater, while a motion picture was being exhibited, without the theater owner's express written consent. The theater owner may only detain the offender in a reasonable manner for a reasonable time.

The committee substitute grants the theater owner with qualified immunity from civil actions arising out of measures taken to detain offenders while awaiting the arrival of a law enforcement officer. The committee substitute permits a civil claim against the theater owner if the plaintiff demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the measures taken were manifestly unreasonable or the period of detention was unreasonably long.

Limitation

The committee substitute specifies that it does not prevent the prosecution of an offense under any other law.

Effective Date

The committee substitute provides an effective date of July 1, 2004.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The committee substitute would permit theater owners in this state to detain and seek the criminal prosecution of persons who operate an audiovisual recording device in a motion picture theater without the owner's express written consent. To the extent that the

committee substitute reduces the occurrence of “camcording,” the committee substitute may reduce the revenue losses observed by the motion picture industry.⁵

C. Government Sector Impact:

The committee substitute does not designate a state agency as responsible for enforcement or prosecution of violations. State attorneys and local law enforcement agencies may experience a moderate workload increase associated with the enforcement and prosecution of violations.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill’s sponsor or the Florida Senate.

⁵ See the discussion of unauthorized recording of motion pictures on pages 1 and 2 of this staff analysis.