

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 651 Secondhand Dealers
SPONSOR(S): Kottkamp and others
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 694

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Criminal Justice Committee		Ferguson	Kramer
2) Business Regulation Committee			
3) Governmental Operations Committee			
4) Justice Council			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

A secondhand dealer is a person who is in the business of purchasing, consigning, or trading certain types of previously owned or used personal property. Pawnbrokers were formerly regulated as secondhand dealers but are now separately regulated under ch. 539, F.S.

This bill adopts some of the regulatory restrictions currently applicable to pawnbrokers, making them applicable to secondhand dealers. Changes include:

- Revising definitions of what constitutes secondhand goods and exempting persons.
- Specifically exempting certain internet business from regulation as a secondhand dealer.
- Revising the recordkeeping requirements and increases criminal penalties.
- Increasing time law enforcement can order hold on stolen goods.

This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments, although it is likely to have a negative fiscal impact on secondhand dealers.

Provides an effective date of October 1, 2006.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide limited government -- This bill increases regulation of secondhand dealers.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

A secondhand dealer is a person who is in the business of purchasing, consigning, or trading certain types of previously owned or used personal property. Regulation of secondhand dealers is pursuant to ch. 538, F.S. The minimal registration requirements are administered by the Department of Revenue. Initial registration as a secondhand dealer is \$6.00 per location, plus \$47.00 for each principal to conduct a criminal history background check. Annual renewal is \$6.00 per location.

Prior to 1996, pawnbrokers were also regulated by ch. 538, F.S., but pawnbrokers are now regulated pursuant to ch. 539, F.S.

This bill deletes references to pawnbrokers from ch. 538, F.S., and in general increases some of the regulation of secondhand dealers to be similar to the regulation of pawnbrokers.

Items Regulated

Section 538.03(1)(g), F.S., currently defines "secondhand goods". That definition is limited to a list of specified items. This bill removes the current list and instead defines secondhand goods as personal property previously owned or used, which is not regulated metals property otherwise regulated and which is purchased, consigned, or traded as used property and specifically excludes: office furniture, pianos, books, clothing, organs, coins, motor vehicles, costume jewelry, and secondhand sports equipment that is not permanently labeled with a serial number.

Mail Order Sales

Section 538.03(2), F.S., currently list entities and types of sales that are exempt from regulation pursuant to ch. 538, F.S. Included in the list of exemptions is the sale of secondhand goods by mail order, including internet sales.¹

This bill deletes the exemption, thereby providing that a person in the business of purchasing or consigning secondhand goods through the mail, or through computer services, is subject to regulation as a secondhand goods dealer under ch. 538, F.S. However, this bill adds an exception for a business that contracts with other persons or entities to offer its secondhand goods for sale, purchase, consignment, or trade via an internet website, and that maintains a shop, store, or other business premises for this purpose are exempt if:

- The secondhand goods are available for viewing on the website at no charge;
- The records of the sale, purchase, consignment, or trade are maintained for 2 years;
- The records of the sale, purchase, consignment, or trade contain the serial number of each item, if any;
- The secondhand goods are searchable by state or zip code on the website;

¹ Specifically, the exemption deleted is for: "Any person purchasing, consigning, or pawning secondhand goods ordered by mail, computer-assisted shopping, media-assisted, media-facilitated, or media-solicited shopping or shopping by other means of media communication, including, but not limited to, direct mail advertising, unsolicited distribution of catalogs, television, radio, or other electronic media, telephone, magazine, or newspaper advertising, so long as such person is in this state at the time of the order."

- The name under which it conducts business on the website is provided to the appropriate law enforcement agency;
- The business allows the appropriate law enforcement agency to inspect its premises any time during normal business hours;
- Any payment for sale, purchase, consignment, or trade must be made by check or via a money transmitter licensed under part II of chapter 560; and
 - At least 48 hours after the estimated time of contracting to offer the secondhand goods, the business verifies the item is not stolen via its serial number against the FDLE stolen property database; or
 - The business provides the appropriate law enforcement agency with an electronic copy of the name, address, phone number, driver's license number, and issuing state of the person with whom the business contracted to offer the goods, as well as an accurate description of the goods within 24 hours after entering into the contract unless other arrangements are made between the business and law enforcement.

This bill also exempts any person offering his or her own personal property for sale, purchase, consignment, or trade via an internet website when that person is not required to have a local occupational or business license for this purpose.

This bill also exempts a business whose primary business is the sale, rental, or trade of motion picture videos or video games if the business:

- Requires the sellers to have a current account with the business;
- Has on file the name, address, home and work telephone numbers, government-issued identification number, place of employment, date of birth, gender, and right thumbprint of each seller of secondhand goods;
- Purchases secondhand goods from the property owner or representative at the place of business pursuant to an agreement in writing and signed by the property owner which describes the property purchased, states the date and time of the purchase, and states the seller is the lawful owner;
- Retains such purchase agreements for at least 1 year; and
- Pays for the purchased property in the form of a store credit that is issued to the seller and is redeemable solely by the seller or authorized user of seller's account.

Recordkeeping Requirements

Section 538.04, F.S., currently requires a secondhand dealer to maintain records of all goods purchased, and requires that a copy of each purchase record be forwarded to local law enforcement within 24 hours of purchase. The form for providing that information must be approved by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Section 538.06(4), F.S., currently requires a secondhand dealer to keep the forms for 5 years.

This bill increases the amount of information that must be obtained on the form to match the information that a pawnbroker must collect. The increased information includes a requirement that the person selling or consigning goods to the secondhand dealer must furnish a thumbprint. The retention time for the forms is reduced from 5 years to 3 years and forms must be maintained at the licensed premises for the first year. This bill also provides that, if local law enforcement provides the software and the equipment, the dealer must transmit the information electronically. These provisions are identical to current pawn shop regulation under ch. 539, F.S.

Criminal Penalties

Section 538.04(4), F.S., currently provides that it is a criminal offense for any person to knowingly give false verification of ownership or to give false or altered identification, and who receives money from a secondhand dealer for goods sold. If the value of the money received is less than \$300, it is a first degree misdemeanor; if greater than \$300, it is a third degree felony.

This bill includes goods consigned or traded and increases the criminal penalties to a felony of the third degree if the value to the money received is less than \$300; if greater than \$300 it is a second degree felony. These penalties are analogous with the statute applicable to pawnbrokers.²

The felony criminal offenses in s. 538.04(4), F.S., are not classified in the offense severity ranking chart of the Criminal Punishment Code. Accordingly, the amended third degree felony will be a Level 1 offense, and the second degree felony will be a Level 4 offense.³

Section 538.07(2), F.S., currently provides that, upon a conviction for theft, violation of the secondhand dealer law, or dealing in stolen property, a court must order the defendant to make restitution to the secondhand dealer. This bill provides that restitution must be made to the secondhand dealer or to the lawful owner of the property, as applicable.

Inspection by Law Enforcement

Currently, the registered premises of a secondhand dealer, including the purchase records, may be inspected by the police department, if the premises is located in a municipality, or the sheriff, if located outside a municipality, during regular business hours.

This bill specifies that the “entire” registered premises is open to inspection, and provides that any law enforcement officer with jurisdiction over the registered premises may inspect the premises. Thus, this bill provides that county sheriffs may inspect secondhand dealers located anywhere in their county.

Minimum Holding Period

Section 538.06(1), F.S., provides that a secondhand dealer must hold property 15 days before re-selling the property, unless the person who sold the property to the dealer buys it back. Chapter 539, F.S., requires a pawnbroker to hold property 30 days before offering the property for sale to the public.

Law Enforcement Hold

Section 538.06(3), F.S., currently provides that a law enforcement officer may extend the hold period for 60 days if the law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe the property is stolen.

This bill amends the law enforcement hold period for secondhand dealers to 90 days. This bill also provides that, if a 90 day hold is in effect, the secondhand dealer may be compelled to surrender property believed to be stolen property to local law enforcement for use in a criminal proceeding. The criminal court may order the property returned to the person from whom it was stolen, in which case the thief must pay restitution, including attorney’s fees and costs, to the secondhand dealer. This provision is identical to one currently applicable to pawnbrokers.⁴

Registration as a Secondhand Dealer

Section 538.09(5), F.S., currently provides the requirements for registration as a secondhand goods dealer. Included is a requirement that any principal in the business not have been convicted of, or entered a plea of guilty or no contest to a crime against the laws of this state or any other state or of the United States which relates to registration as a secondhand dealer or which involves theft, larceny, dealing in stolen property, receiving stolen property, burglary, embezzlement, obtaining property by false pretenses, possession of altered property, any felony drug offense, any violation of section 812.015, or any fraudulent dealing, within the previous 5 years.

² See section 539.001(8)(b) .8.a and .b, F.S.

³ Section 921.0023, F.S.

⁴ Section 539.001(16)(e)2., F.S.

This bill changes the time period from the previous 5 years to the previous 10 years, and adds that "adjudication withheld" for any of the enumerated offenses will also disqualifying a person from being a principal in a business acting as a secondhand dealer.⁵

This bill also amends section 538.09, F.S., to add upon the request of a law enforcement official, the Department of Revenue shall release the name and address of any secondhand dealer registered to do business within the official's jurisdiction.

The effective date of this bill is October 1, 2006.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1 amends s. 538.03, F.S., regarding the definitions applicable to ch. 538, F.S.

Section 2 amends s. 538.04, F.S., regarding the recordkeeping requirements to provide criminal penalties.

Section 3 amends s. 538.05, F.S., regarding provisions relating to the inspection or records and premises.

Section 4 amends s. 538.06, F.S., regarding how long a secondhand goods dealer must hold stolen goods.

Section 5 amends s. 538.07, F.S., regarding restitution from a secondhand dealer.

Section 6 amends s. 538.09, F.S., regarding registration as a secondhand goods dealer.

Section 7 repeals s. 538.16, F.S., regarding disposal of pawned property.

Section 8 amends s. 516.02, F.S., to remove cross-references.

Section 9 reenacts s. 790.335 (3)(f), F.S., regarding firearm records to provide criminal penalties.

Section 10 provides an effective date of October 1, 2006.

II. 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:

⁵ Pawnbroker registration also has a 10 year restriction, and counts offenses for which adjudication was withheld. Pawnbroker law, however, has additional disqualifying offenses. See section 539.001(4)(a)4., F.S.

This bill will have a direct negative fiscal impact on businesses that deal in secondhand goods and are not exempt from the regulation. They will be required to hold merchandise longer before selling it, which is likely to increase storage costs and floor plan interest costs. They will also have increased transactional and recordkeeping costs related to the increased amount of information required for the secondhand transaction form.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill appears to be exempt from the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution because it is a criminal law.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES