

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

This bill does not appear to implicate any of the House Principles.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Section 381.95, F.S., provides a public records exemption for certain information concerning medical facilities, storage facilities, and laboratories maintained by the Department of Health as part of the state's plan to defend against terrorism. Information specifically made exempt¹ includes information that identifies or describes the name, location, pharmaceutical cache, contents, capacity, equipment, physical features, or capabilities for certain individual medical facilities, storage facilities, or laboratories to defend against an act of terrorism. The exemption was enacted in the 2001 C special session following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Pursuant to the Open Government Sunset Review Act,² the exemption will repeal on October 2, 2006, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

Effect of Bill

The bill removes the repeal date, thereby reenacting the public records exemption. It makes editorial changes and reorganizes the section.

The bill removes the provision requiring an agency with authorized access to such information to maintain the exempt status of that information. In *Ragsdale v. State*,³ the Supreme Court held that

[T]he applicability of a particular exemption is determined by the document being withheld, not by the identity of the agency possessing the record . . . the focus in determining whether a document has lost its status as a public record must be on the policy behind the exemption and not on the simple fact that the information has changed agency hands.⁴

In *City of Riviera Beach v. Barfield*,⁵ the court stated “[h]ad the legislature intended the exemption for active criminal investigative information to evaporate upon the sharing of that information with another criminal justice agency, it would have expressly provided so in the statute.”⁶ As such, the provision is

¹ There is a difference between records that are exempt from public records requirements and those that are *confidential* and exempt. If the Legislature makes a record confidential and exempt, such record may not be released by an agency to anyone other than to the persons or entities designated in the statute. See Attorney General Opinion 85-62. If a record is simply made exempt from disclosure requirements, an agency is not prohibited from disclosing the record in all circumstances. See *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 683, 687 (Fla. 5th DCA), review denied, 589 So.2d 289 (Fla. 1991).

² Section 119.15, F.S.

³ 720 So.2d 203 (Fla. 1998).

⁴ *Id.* at 206, 207.

⁵ 642 So. 2d 1135 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994), review denied, 651 So. 2d 1192 (Fla. 1995). In *Barfield*, Barfield argued that once the City of West Palm Beach shared its active criminal investigative information with the City of Riviera Beach the public records exemption for such information was waived. Barfield based that argument on a statement from the 1993 *Government-In-The-Sunshine Manual* (a booklet prepared by the Office of the Attorney General). The Attorney General opined “once a record is transferred from one public agency to another, the record loses its exempt status.” The court declined to accept the Attorney General’s view. As a result, that statement has been removed from the *Government-In-The-Sunshine Manual*.

⁶ *Id.* at 1137.

unnecessary and has been removed, because had the Legislature intended for the exempt status to evaporate then the Legislature would have stated as much.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1 amends s. 381.95, F.S., to remove the October 2, 2006, repeal date.

Section 2 provides an effective date of October 1, 2006.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None. This bill does not create, modify, amend, or eliminate a state revenue source.

2. Expenditures:

The bill may represent a minimal non-recurring positive impact on state expenditures. A bill enacting or amending a public records exemption causes a non-recurring negative fiscal impact in the year of enactment as a result of training employees responsible for replying to public records requests. In the case of bills reviewed under the Open Government Sunset Review process, training costs are incurred if the bill does not pass or if the exemption is amended, as retraining is required. Because the bill eliminates the repeal of the exemption, state government may recognize a minimal nonrecurring decrease in expenditures because employee-training activities are avoided.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None. This bill does not create, modify, amend, or eliminate a local revenue source.

2. Expenditures:

None. This bill does not create, modify, amend, or eliminate local expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds. This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities. This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities have to raise revenue.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act sets forth a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or public meetings exemptions. It requires an automatic repeal of the exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.

The Act provides that a public records or public meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose, and may be no broader than is necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- Allowing the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
- Protecting sensitive personal information that, if released, would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety. However, only the identity of an individual may be exempted under this provision; or,
- Protecting trade or business secrets.

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 and a two-thirds vote for passage are required because of the requirements of Art. 1, s. 24(c), 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 confidential or exempt records), then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are not required.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

None.