

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee

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**BILL:** SB 754

**INTRODUCER:** Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee

**SUBJECT:** OGSR/Building Plans, Blueprints Held by an Agency

**DATE:** February 27, 2009      **REVISED:** \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Pardue	Skelton	MS	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	McKay	Wilson	GO	<b>Favorable</b>
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

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**I. Summary:**

This bill saves from repeal an existing public records exemption for building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams which depict the internal layout or structural elements of an attractions and recreation facility, entertainment or resort complex, industrial complex, retail and service development, office development, or hotel or motel development. The exemption applies to draft, preliminary, and final formats of such plans. The bill deletes the provisions that repeal the exemption, and makes an organizational change to clarify the exemption.

This bill reenacts and amends s. 119.071(3)(c), F.S.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Public Records**

Florida has a long history of providing public access to the records and meetings of governmental and other public entities. The Florida Legislature enacted the first public records law in 1892.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, Floridians voted to adopt an amendment to the Florida Constitution that raised the statutory right of public access to public records to a constitutional level.

Article I, section 24(a) of the State Constitution, and the Public Records Act,<sup>2</sup> specify the conditions under which public access must be provided to governmental records. Article I, section 24(b) of the State Constitution and s. 286.011, F.S., the Sunshine Law, specify the

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1390, 1391 F.S. (Rev. 1892).

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 119, F.S.

requirements for public meetings. While the State Constitution provides that records and meetings are to be open to the public, it also provides that the Legislature may create exemptions to these requirements by general law if a public need exists and certain procedural requirements are met. Article I, section 24 of the Florida Constitution governs the creation and expansion of exemptions to provide, in effect, that any legislation that creates a new exemption or that substantially amends an existing exemption must also contain a statement of the public necessity that justifies the exemption. Article I, section 24 of the Florida Constitution provides that any bill that contains an exemption may not contain other substantive provisions, although it may contain multiple exemptions.

The Open Government Sunset Review Act,<sup>3</sup> provides for the review and repeal of any public records or meetings exemptions that are created or substantially amended in 1996 and subsequently. The chapter defines the term “substantial amendment” for purposes of triggering a review and repeal of an exemption to include an amendment that expands the scope of the exemption to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. The law clarifies that an exemption is not substantially amended if an amendment limits or narrows the scope of an existing exemption. The law was amended by ch. 2005-251, Laws of Florida, to modify the criteria under the Open Government Sunset Review Act so that consideration will be given to reducing the number of exemptions by creating a uniform exemption during the review of an exemption subject to sunset.

Under the Open Government Sunset Review Act, an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption:

- Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, the administration of which would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
- 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; or
- 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(6)(a), F.S., requires, as part of the review process, the consideration of the following questions:

- 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?

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<sup>3</sup> Section 119.15, F.S.

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

Further, the exemption must be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. In addition, the Legislature must find that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption.

Under s. 119.15(8), F.S., notwithstanding s. 768.28, F.S., or any other law, neither the state or its political subdivisions nor any other public body shall be made party to any suit in any court or incur any liability for the repeal or revival and reenactment of an exemption under the section. The failure of the Legislature to comply strictly with the section does not invalidate an otherwise valid reenactment. Further, one session of the Legislature may not bind a future Legislature. As a result, a new session of the Legislature could maintain an exemption that does not meet the standards set forth in the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995.

### **2004 Legislative Findings**

In creating s. 119.071(3)(c), F.S., the Legislature found the public necessity to exempt building plans and related documents of an attractions and recreation facility, entertainment or resort complex, industrial complex, retail and service development, office development, or hotel or motel development that are held by governmental agencies.<sup>4</sup> The finding further stated that such exempt building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams are vital components of public safety that if made publicly available, would increase the ability of persons who desire to harm individuals located in or using those structures.

### **2009 Open Government Sunset Review**

The Senate Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee, in its review of Senate Interim Project Report 2009-215, accepted the report's recommendation that the exemption provided for building plans continues to be sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government. Terrorists continue to demonstrate the ability to plan and carry out sophisticated acts of terrorism. Their capability appears to be no less today than at the time of the Legislature's original findings in 2004.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This bill provides for the reenactment of s. 119.071(3)(c), F.S., and the deletion of provisions that repeal the exemption.

Section 119.071(3)(c), F.S., provides for a public records exemption for building plans and other related documents. Specifically, this bill provides for the exemption of building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams which depict the internal layout and structural elements of an

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<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2004-9, Laws of Florida.

attractions and recreation facility, entertainment or resort complex, industrial complex, retail and service development, office development, or hotel or motel development held by an agency as defined in s. 119.011, F.S. The exemption applies to draft, preliminary, and final formats of such plans.

The bill reorganizes s. 119.071(3)(c), F.S., to clarify the exemption. However, none of the organizational changes provide any substantive change to the exemption.

This bill provides an effective date of October 1, 2009.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

##### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

Article I, section 24 of the State Constitution permits the Legislature to provide by general law for the exemption of open meetings and for the exemption of records. A law that exempts a record must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.<sup>5</sup>

##### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

#### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

##### **A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

##### **B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

##### **C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

#### **VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

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<sup>5</sup> See, *Memorial Hospital-West Volusia v. News-Journal Corporation*, 729 So.2d 373, 380 (Fla. 1999); *Halifax Hospital Medical Center v. News-Journal Corporation*, 724 So.2d 567 (Fla. 1999)

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

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

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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