

HOUSE PRINCIPLES

Members are encouraged to evaluate proposed legislation in light of the following guiding principles of the House of Representatives

- Balance the state budget.
- Create a legal and regulatory environment that fosters economic growth and job creation.
- Lower the tax burden on families and businesses.
- Reverse or restrain the growth of government.
- Promote public safety.
- Promote educational accountability, excellence, and choice.
- Foster respect for the family and for innocent human life.
- Protect Florida's natural beauty.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

Chapter 212, F.S., contains the state's statutory provisions authorizing the levying and collection of Florida's sales and use tax, as well as exemptions and credits applicable to certain items or uses under specified circumstances. The statutes currently provide more than 200 different exemptions.

Aviation exemptions from Florida sales tax

Section 212.05(1)(a)1., F.S., imposes a 6 percent sales tax on tangible personal property sold in Florida, including aircraft. However, several aviation-related exemptions have been enacted by the Legislature. Some exemptions are based on the type of aircraft, while others are based on whether, or how long, the aircraft stays in Florida. Currently exempt from sales and use taxes are:

- Aircraft modification service charges – Including parts and equipment furnished or installed, these charges are exempt if performed under authority of a supplemental-type certificate issued by the Federal Aviation Administration.¹
- Aircraft repair and maintenance labor charges – For qualified aircraft defined in s. 212.02(33), F.S.,² for aircraft of more than 15,000 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight, and for rotary wing aircraft of more than 10,000 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight.³
- Equipment, parts, and replacement engines used in aircraft repair and maintenance – For qualified aircraft, for aircraft of more than 15,000 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight, and for rotary wing aircraft of more than 10,300 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight.⁴
- Aircraft sales and leases – For qualified aircraft and for aircraft of more than 15,000 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight used by a common carrier, as defined by federal regulations.⁵

¹ Section 212.08(5)(i), F.S.

² "Qualified aircraft" are certain aircraft of less than 10,000 pounds maximum certified takeoff weight. Section 212.02(33), F.S.

³ Section 212.08(7)(ee), F.S.; Charges for parts and equipment furnished in connection with such labor charges are taxable, except as otherwise exempt.

⁴ Section 212.08(7)(rr), F.S.

⁵ Section 212.08(7)(ss), F.S.

- Aircraft used outside of Florida – It is presumed that tangible property (such as aircraft) used in another state, territory of the United States, or in the District of Columbia for 6 months or longer before being brought into Florida was not purchased for use in Florida.⁶
- Aircraft exported under its own power out of the continental U.S. – Purchaser must provide a validated U.S. customs declaration and the canceled U.S. registry of the aircraft.⁷
- Aircraft purchased by a nonresident of Florida – Purchaser must leave Florida within 10 days of purchase of the aircraft, or within 20 days after the completion of repairs or alterations, and cannot return to the state within 6 months after the date of departure; an exempted aircraft may re-enter Florida for repairs within 6 months from the date of its departure so long as the aircraft is removed within 20 days of completion of repairs.⁸

Partial Exemption

- Section 212.08(11), F.S., provides that the sales tax imposed on a flyable aircraft manufacturer is equal to the amount of sales tax that would be imposed by the state where the aircraft will be domiciled, up to the 6 percent imposed by Florida. This partial exemption applies only if the purchaser is either: a resident of another state who will not use the aircraft in Florida; a purchaser who is a resident of another state and uses the aircraft in interstate or foreign commerce; or if the purchaser is a resident of a foreign country.

Fractional Aircraft Ownership Programs

With “fractional aircraft ownership,” individuals or entities purchase an undivided interest in a specific, serial-numbered aircraft, and are guaranteed availability of the aircraft (or a similar one) within a time-frame specified by contract. Typically, fractional aircraft ownership contracts also require fractional owners to pay management or maintenance fees for the operation, upkeep, and storage of the aircraft.

NetJets, based in New Jersey, is generally acknowledged by the industry as the first fractional ownership operation.⁹ It began in 1986 with the creation of a program that offered aircraft owners increased flexibility in the ownership and operation of aircraft, and provided for the management of the aircraft by an aircraft management company. “The aircraft owners participating in the program agreed not only to share their own aircraft with others having a shared interest in that aircraft, but also to lease their aircraft to other owners in the program (called a “dry lease exchange”). The aircraft owners used a common management company to provide aviation management services including maintenance of the aircraft, pilot training and assignment, and to administer the leasing arrangements.”¹⁰

Because of the substantial growth of this industry in the 1990’s, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) adopted rules on fractional aircraft ownership operations in 2001.¹¹ The rules establish ownership definitions and set forth certain requirements for fractional aircraft ownership and program operation. For example, the rules define “minimum fractional ownership interest” as equal to, or greater than, 1/16th of a subsonic, fixed-winged, or powered-lift program aircraft; for a helicopter, the ownership interest can be as small as 1/32nd.¹²

The National Business Aviation Association, Inc., lists 70 fractional ownership programs available in the U.S.¹³ In its annual report the General Aviation Manufacturers Association states that the number of aircraft operating in fractional programs grew 6.2 percent to 1,094 in 2008, with about 5,179 total

⁶ Section 212.06(5)(a), F.S.

⁷ Section 212.06(5)(a), F.S.

⁸ Section 212.05(1)(a), F.S.

⁹ Information at http://www.netjets.com/About_NetJets/History.asp (last visited 3/12/2010).

¹⁰ Fractional Aircraft Ownership Background and Rulemaking, at <http://www.nbaa.org/admin/options/fractional/> (last visited 3/12/2010).

¹¹ Title 14, Chapter I, Part 91, Subpart K, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

¹² 14 CFR s. 91.1001(b)(10).

¹³ Search for “Fractional Share Providers”, at <http://data.nbaa.org/prodsvcs/directory/search.cfm> (last visited 3/12/2010).

fractional share owners.¹⁴ The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports in its “Aerospace Forecast for Fiscal Years 2008-2025” that fractional ownership aircraft fly about 1,200 hours annually compared to approximately 350 hours for all business jets in all applications.¹⁵ The FAA report states that because of factors such as U.S. airport delays and the advancements being made in very light jets (VJLs)¹⁶, the business/corporate side of aviation will likely increase its use of fractional aircraft ownership programs or the like.¹⁷

According to Florida’s Revenue Estimating Conference in 2008, there were approximately 385 Florida owners of fractional airplane interests in 2006. Currently, Florida sales tax exemptions are available for aircraft of a certain takeoff weight. There is a gap for aircraft between 10,000-pounds and 15,000-pounds certified takeoff weight. Several of the types of planes typically used in fractional aircraft ownership programs fall between these thresholds; thus some aircraft used in fractional operations are ineligible for certain current Florida tax exemptions.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill creates s. 212.02(34), F.S., to define “fractional aircraft ownership program” for purposes of ch. 212, F.S. “Fractional aircraft ownership program” means a program that meets the FAA requirements of fractional ownership operations set forth at 14 C.F.R. part 91, subpart K. Additionally, the business or affiliated group providing the fractional ownership program must own or lease a minimum of 25 aircraft, which are also used in the program, to fall within the definition.

The FAA rules define “fractional ownership program” in 14 CFR, s. 91.1001(b)(5), as “any system of aircraft ownership and exchange that consists of all of the following elements:

- (i) The provision for fractional ownership program management services by a single fractional ownership program manager on behalf of the fractional owners.
- (ii) Two or more airworthy aircraft.
- (iii) One or more fractional owners per program aircraft, with at least one program aircraft having more than one owner.
- (iv) Possession of at least a minimum fractional ownership interest in one or more program aircraft by each fractional owner.
- (v) A dry-lease aircraft exchange arrangement among all of the fractional owners.
- (vi) Multi-year program agreements covering the fractional ownership, fractional ownership program management services, and dry-lease aircraft exchange aspects of the program.”

The bill creates s. 212.08(7)(ggg), F.S., to create a new tax exemption for fractional aircraft ownership programs. The exemption applies to: Aircraft primarily used in a fractional aircraft ownership program; and any parts or labor used in the completion, maintenance, repair, or overhaul of an aircraft primarily used in a fractional aircraft ownership program.

The bill allows the Department of Revenue (DOR) to adopt rules to administer the provisions in new paragraph (7)(ggg), including rules determining the format of the certificate. In order to obtain the exemption, the program manager must furnish the dealer with a DOR formatted certificate stating that: The lease, purchase, repair, or maintenance is for an aircraft primarily used in a fractional aircraft ownership program; and the program manager qualifies for the exemption.

¹⁴ General Aviation Manufacturers Association Annual Industry Review and Market Outlook 2008, Page 5 (data from NETJETS.com), at <http://www.gama.aero/publications> (last visited 3/12/2010).

¹⁵ The business jet industry groups the jets into five loosely-defined “classes”: Heavy, Super Mid-size, Mid-size, Light, and Very Light.

¹⁶ Generally, VLJs are small jet aircraft approved for single-pilot operation, seating 4-8 people, with a maximum certified takeoff weight under 10,000 pounds.

¹⁷ Federal Aviation Administration, Aerospace Forecast for Fiscal Years 2008-2025

This certificate may be left on file with the dealer if the program manager transacts tax-exempt business with the dealer on a continual basis. The program manager must notify the dealer if the program manager no longer qualifies for the exemption.

The bill creates s. 212.0597, F.S., to establish a maximum tax of \$300 for state and local taxes levied under ch. 212, F.S., including any discretionary sales surtaxes, on the sale or use of a fractional aircraft ownership interest pursuant to a fractional aircraft ownership program. The tax cap applies to the total consideration paid for the fractional ownership interest, including amounts for monthly management or maintenance fees. It applies when the fractional ownership interest is sold by or to the program manager of the fractional ownership program or transferred upon the program manager's approval.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2010.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates s. 212.02(34), F.S., to define "fractional aircraft ownership program" for purposes of ch. 212, F.S.

Section 2. Creates s. 212.08(7)(ggg), F.S., to create a new tax exemption for fractional aircraft ownership programs. The bill allows the Department of Revenue to adopt rules to administer the provisions in new paragraph (7)(ggg).

Section 3. Creates s. 212.0597, F.S., to establish a maximum tax of \$300 for state and local taxes levied under ch. 212, F.S., including any discretionary sales surtaxes, on the sale or use of a fractional aircraft ownership interest pursuant to a fractional aircraft ownership program.

Section 4. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2010.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) estimates that in FY 2010-11 the bill will reduce state General Revenue by \$0.3 million (insignificant recurring impact) and state trust fund revenues by an insignificant amount.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) estimates that in FY 2010-11 the reduction in local government revenues will be insignificant.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Companies interested in offering fractional aircraft ownership programs in Florida, and individuals or entities wishing to purchase interests in these aircraft, will benefit from not having to pay certain state sales taxes related to their purchases and operations. The new tax exemption may also encourage fractional aircraft companies to conduct more maintenance, repair, and aircraft customization activities in Florida.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The mandates provision appears to apply because this bill reduces the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; however an exemption applies because the Revenue Estimating Conference estimates that this bill will have an insignificant fiscal impact on local governments for mandate purposes.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill provides specific authority for the Department of Revenue to adopt rules to administer the exemption.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 25, 2010, the Finance and Tax Council adopted an amendment which clarifies that the \$300 maximum tax cap contained in the bill applies when a fractional ownership interest is sold by or to the program manager of the fractional ownership program or transferred upon the program manager's approval.

The bill was reported favorably and the analysis has been updated to reflect the council substitute.

On March 17, 2010, the Economic Development Policy Committee adopted an amendment, which:

- Clarifies that the Fractional aircraft ownership program must include a minimum of 25 aircraft owned or leased by the program manager and used in the program.
- Provides that the Department of Revenue may adopt rules to administer paragraph (ggg), including rules determining the format of the certificate.
- Replaces the terms "purchaser", "lessee", and "operator" with "program manager".

The bill was reported favorably and the analysis has been updated to reflect the committee substitute.