

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FINAL BILL ANALYSIS**

BILL #:	CS/CS/HB 645 (CS/CS/SB 1406)	FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:	
SPONSOR(S):	Government Operations Subcommittee; Insurance & Banking Subcommittee; Moraitis (Governmental Oversight and Accountability; Banking and Insurance; Altman)	114 Y's	0 of Nays N's
COMPANION BILLS:	CS/CS/SB 1406	GOVERNOR'S ACTION:	Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

House Bill 645 passed the House on February 23, 2012, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 7, 2012. The bill provides that proprietary business information provided to the Office of Insurance Regulation by a title insurance agency or insurer is confidential and exempt from public records requirements until such information is otherwise publicly available or is no longer treated by the title insurance agency or insurer as proprietary business information. However, information provided by multiple title insurance agencies and insurers may be aggregated on an industry-wide basis and disclosed to the public as long as the specific identities of the agencies or insurers are not revealed.

“Proprietary business information” is defined as information that:

- is owned or controlled by a title insurance agency or insurer requesting confidentiality under this section;
- is intended to be and is treated by the title insurance agency or insurer as private in that the disclosure of the information would cause harm to the business operations of the title insurance agency or insurer;
- has not been publicly disclosed unless disclosed pursuant to a statutory provision, an order of a court or administrative body, or a private agreement, providing that the information may be released to the public; and
- concerns business plans, internal auditing controls and reports of internal auditors, reports of external auditors for privately held companies, trade secrets as defined in s. 688.002, F.S., or financial information, including, but not limited to, revenue data, loss expense data, gross receipts, taxes paid, capital investment, customer identification, and employee wages.

The bill provides for repeal of the exemption on October 2, 2017, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature. It also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state or local government.

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 4, 2012, ch. 2012-207, Laws of Florida. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2012.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Background

Public Records Law

Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government records. The section guarantees every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. The Legislature, however, may provide by general law for the exemption of records from the requirements of Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution. The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption (public necessity statement) and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose. A bill enacting an exemption or substantially amending an existing exemption may not contain other substantive provisions, although it may contain multiple exemptions that relate to one subject.¹

Public policy regarding access to government records is addressed further in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07(1), F.S., guarantees every person a right to inspect and copy any state, county, or municipal record. Furthermore, the Open Government Sunset Review Act² provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. In addition, it may be no broader than is necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption.
- Protects 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.
- Protects trade or business secrets.

Title Insurance

Title insurance insures owners of real property, or others having an interest in real property, against loss by encumbrance, defective title, invalidity, or adverse claim to title.³ Purchasers of real property and lenders utilize title insurance to protect themselves against claims by others that claim to be the rightful owner of the property. Under current law, two entities provide regulatory oversight of the title insurance industry: the Department of Financial Services (DFS), which regulates title agents, and the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR), which regulates title insurers, including licensing and promulgation of rates.

House Bill 643 (2012)

House Bill 643 requires title insurers, their direct or retail businesses in the state, and title agencies to submit to the OIR, on or before March 31 of each year, revenue, loss, and expense data for the most recently concluded year that are determined necessary to assist in the analysis of premium rates, title search costs, and the condition of the Florida title insurance industry. The Financial Services Commission is required to adopt rules to assist in data analysis and collection. The DFS is required to take action against the authority of any title insurance agent or agency that fails to timely submit the required data, including suspension or revocation of a license or appointment.

¹ Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

² Section 119.15, F.S.

³ Section 624.608(2), F.S., provides that "title insurance" is also insurance of owners and secured parties of the existence, attachment, perfection and priority of a security interest in personal property under the Uniform Commercial Code.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill provides that proprietary business information provided to the OIR by a title insurance agency or insurer is confidential and exempt⁴ from public records requirements until such information is otherwise publicly available or is no longer treated by the title insurance agency or insurer as proprietary business information. However, information provided by multiple title insurance agencies and insurers may be aggregated on an industry-wide basis and disclosed to the public as long as the specific identities of the agencies or insurers are not revealed.

The bill defines “proprietary business information” as information that:

- is owned or controlled by a title insurance agency or insurer requesting confidentiality under this section;
- is intended to be and is treated by the title insurance agency or insurer as private in that the disclosure of the information would cause harm to the business operations of the title insurance agency or insurer;
- has not been publicly disclosed unless disclosed pursuant to a statutory provision, an order of a court or administrative body, or a private agreement, providing that the information may be released to the public; and
- concerns business plans, internal auditing controls and reports of internal auditors, reports of external auditors for privately held companies, trade secrets as defined in s. 688.002, F.S., or financial information, including, but not limited to, revenue data, loss expense data, gross receipts, taxes paid, capital investment, customer identification, and employee wages.

The bill provides for repeal of the exemption on October 2, 2017, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature. It also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.⁵

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:

⁴ There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public record requirements and those the Legislature deems confidential and exempt. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. (*See WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004), review denied 892 So.2d 1015 (Fla. 2004); *City of Riviera Beach v. Barfield*, 642 So.2d 1135 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994); *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991). If the Legislature designates a record as confidential and exempt from public disclosure, such record may not be released, by the custodian of public records, to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. (*See* Attorney General Opinion 85-62, August 1, 1985).

⁵ Section 24(c), Art. I of the State Constitution.

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.