

**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.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Banking and Insurance

BILL: SB 102

INTRODUCER: Senator Detert

SUBJECT: Charitable Contribution

DATE: March 12, 2013      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Oh	Burgess	BI	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____	CM	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

SB 102 amends the Florida Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act (FUFTA) by providing protection against creditors’ clawback actions for charitable contributions received in good faith by a qualified religious or charitable organization. A charitable contribution made by a natural person, however, is subject to clawback actions if received within 2 years of the commencement of an action under FUFTA, a bankruptcy petition, or an insolvency proceeding, unless the transfer was consistent with the transferor’s practices in making charitable contributions or the transfer did not exceed 15 percent of the transferor’s gross annual income. The bill defines "charitable contribution" and "qualified religious or charitable entity" consistent with how those terms are defined in the Internal Revenue Code.

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 726.102, 726.109, 213.758, 718.704, and 721.05.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Florida Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act**

The Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act (UFTA) has been adopted by 44 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and was adopted by Florida in 1987.<sup>1</sup> The Florida Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act (FUFTA) provides a creditor with a means to reach assets that a debtor has transferred to another person to keep the assets from being used to satisfy a debt to the creditor, and defines the circumstances for application of the law. Under FUFTA, a transfer made or an obligation

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 87-79, Laws of Florida. The short title for chapter 726, F.S., is the “Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act.”

incurred by a debtor is fraudulent as to a creditor, whether the creditor's claim arose before or after the transfer was made or the obligation was incurred, if the debtor made the transfer or incurred the obligation:

- With actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud any creditor of the debtor; or
- Without receiving a reasonably equivalent value in exchange for the transfer or obligation, and the debtor:
  - was engaged or was about to engage in a business or a transaction for which the remaining assets of the debtor were unreasonably small in relation to the business or transaction; or
  - intended to incur, or believed or reasonably should have believed that he or she would incur, debts beyond his or her ability to pay as they became due.<sup>2</sup>

In the situations described above, FUFTA provides a statutory remedy for creditors, primarily through a “clawback” action, whereby a prevailing creditor may have a debtor’s fraudulent transfer or obligation made to a third party voided and surrendered back to the creditor. This remedy is subject to a 4-year statute of limitations, unless otherwise specified in s. 726.110, F.S.

FUFTA also provides protection for an innocent third party transferee, by specifying that a transfer is not voidable when the transferee is "a person who took in good faith and for a reasonably equivalent value or against any subsequent transferee or obligee."<sup>3</sup> However, FUFTA does not provide a specific exception for transfers received by charitable organizations, which generally do not give value in exchange for contributions. As a result, a charitable organization can be subject to a clawback action under FUFTA, even when it has already spent the contribution to provide its charitable service. Under an Illinois law that is similar to Florida’s, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled in favor of a creditor in a clawback action, even though the charitable organization received the contribution in good faith.<sup>4</sup>

### **Federal Bankruptcy Code**

Like the UFTA, the Bankruptcy Code (11 *U.S.C.* ss.101 *et seq.*) allows certain fraudulent transfers made by a debtor to be voided. However, unlike the FUFTA, which relies on individual creditors to bring actions to void the transfer, the Bankruptcy Code empowers the bankruptcy trustee to bring the action to void the transfers for the benefit of all the debtor's creditors. The three most important sections of the Bankruptcy Code dealing with fraudulent transactions are ss. 548, 544, and 727.

#### ***Section 548***

Section 548 of the Bankruptcy Code deals exclusively with fraudulent transfers and allows a bankruptcy trustee to void transactions involving actual or constructive fraud. The elements that must be proved to void a fraudulent transfer under s. 548 are substantially similar to those that are required under the FUFTA. Section 548(c) also parallels the FUFTA by providing a “value” defense which is virtually identical to the defense provided by FUFTA, and is available to a

<sup>2</sup> s. 726.105, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> s. 726.109, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *Scholes v. Lehmann*, 56 F.3d 750, 761 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995).

transferee that takes in good faith for a reasonably equivalent value. Unlike the UFTA, however, a bankruptcy trustee may void only fraudulent transfers that occur within 2 years (1 year for cases commenced before April 20, 2006) from the date of the filing of the bankruptcy petition. A bankruptcy trustee seeking to void a transfer that occurred more than 1 year before a debtor's petition must rely on s. 544.

#### ***Section 544***

Section 544 is commonly referred to as the “strong-arm clause” of the Bankruptcy Code and generally allows a bankruptcy trustee to set aside pre-bankruptcy transfers that are voidable under applicable state law. Section 544(b)(1) allows the trustee to set aside transfers that could be voided by any one of the debtor's creditors under the applicable state law, but only if there actually exists a creditor that could void the transfer in state court. If an appropriate creditor does exist, however, the action of the bankruptcy trustee is not limited to those of the actual creditor, and the trustee can void the entire transfer for the benefit of all creditors. Whereas s. 548 may be used only to void transfers that occur within 2 years from the date of filing, s. 544 actions would apply the state statute of limitations, which in Florida would allow transfers to be voided up to 4 years after the transfer. Moreover, for actions based on actual fraud, the limitation period is the longer of 4 years or 1 year after the transfer reasonably could have been discovered.<sup>5</sup>

#### ***Section 727***

Under s. 727, a bankruptcy debtor may be denied a discharge if the debtor transferred property either within 1 year before the bankruptcy petition or during the bankruptcy case with actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud a creditor. The effect of this penalty is to deny the debtor the benefits of bankruptcy and to allow creditors to continue to pursue the debtor even after bankruptcy. Some courts have interpreted this 1-year period broadly and denied a discharge based on earlier acts if there is proof of continuing concealment by the debtor.<sup>6</sup>

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

**Section 1** amends s. 726.102, F.S., relating to definitions. The bill defines “charitable contribution” consistent with its definition in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), if the contribution is cash or a financial instrument defined in the IRC. The bill defines “qualified religious or charitable entity or organization” consistent with its definition in the IRC.

**Section 2** amends s. 726.109, F.S., relating to the protection of a transferee receiving a contribution in good faith. The bill provides that the transfer of a charitable contribution received by a qualified religious or charitable entity or organization in good faith is not a fraudulent transfer. The bill, however, provides that a contribution from a natural person is a fraudulent transfer if it was received within 2 years of the commencement of an action under FUFTA, the filing of a bankruptcy petition, or the commencement of an insolvency action. The bill then provides an exception that such a transfer from a natural person within the 2 years is not fraudulent if:

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<sup>5</sup> See s. 726.110(1), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *In re Hazen*, 37 B.R. 329 (Bankr. M.D. Fla. 1983), denying debtor discharge because it failed to list in its bankruptcy schedules its remaining interest in assets fraudulently transferred to trust, even though fraudulent transfer occurred more than one year before bankruptcy.

- The transfer was consistent with the practices of the transferor; or
- The transfer was received in good faith and the contribution did not exceed 15 percent of the gross income of the transferor.

**Sections 3-5** amends ss. 213.758, 718.704, and 721.05, F.S., respectively, to conform and correct cross-references.

**Section 6** provides that the bill shall take effect upon becoming law.

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

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

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

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Under the bill, creditors would not be able to void certain transfers that they are currently able to void. A creditor would not be able to void a charitable contribution received in good faith by a qualified religious or charitable organization, unless the contribution is from a natural person received within 2 years of the commencement of a FUFTA proceeding, a bankruptcy petition, or insolvency proceeding. Even under those circumstances, the contribution would not be voidable if the transfer was made in good faith and was less than 15 percent of the transferor's gross annual income for the year in which the transfer was made, or was consistent with the transferor's practices in making charitable contributions.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

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

None.

**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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