

HB 331

2013

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to self-defense; amending s. 776.031,
3 F.S.; authorizing a person to use force, except deadly
4 force, in the defense of property; authorizing a
5 person to use deadly force, in the defense of
6 property, to prevent the imminent commission of a
7 forcible felony; providing that a person does not have
8 a duty to retreat if the person is in a certain place;
9 amending s. 776.032, F.S.; revising the definition of
10 the term "criminal prosecution"; requiring, rather
11 than authorizing, a law enforcement agency to
12 investigate the use of force under certain
13 circumstances; deleting the provision that prohibits a
14 law enforcement agency from arresting a person for
15 using force under certain circumstances; authorizing,
16 rather than requiring, the court to award attorney
17 fees, court costs, and other expenses to a defendant
18 who used force under certain circumstances; amending
19 s. 776.041, F.S.; deleting the provisions that make
20 justifiable use of force available to an aggressor who
21 initially provokes the use of force against himself or
22 herself; providing additional circumstances in which
23 justifiable use of force is not available; creating s.
24 776.09, F.S.; providing legislative findings;
25 directing the Department of Law Enforcement to
26 collect, process, maintain, and disseminate
27 information and data on all incidents concerning the
28 alleged justifiable use of force in this state;

HB 331

2013

29 | requiring the department to annually report to the
30 | Legislature the information and data in a format and
31 | manner determined by the Legislature; requiring each
32 | law enforcement agency within the state to monthly
33 | report to the department all incidents and cases in
34 | which a claim regarding the justifiable use of force
35 | is raised; providing an effective date.
36 |

37 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
38 |

39 | Section 1. Section 776.031, Florida Statutes, is amended
40 | to read:

41 | 776.031 Use of force in defense of property ~~others~~.—A
42 | person is justified in the use of force, except deadly force,
43 | against another when and to the extent that the person
44 | reasonably believes that such conduct is necessary to prevent or
45 | terminate the other's trespass on, or other tortious or criminal
46 | interference with, either real property other than a dwelling or
47 | personal property, lawfully in his or her possession or in the
48 | possession of another who is a member of his or her immediate
49 | family or household or of a person whose property he or she has
50 | a legal duty to protect. However, the person is justified in the
51 | use of deadly force only if he or she reasonably believes that
52 | such force is necessary to prevent the imminent commission of a
53 | forcible felony. A person does not have a duty to retreat if the
54 | person is in a place where he or she has a right to be.

55 | Section 2. Section 776.032, Florida Statutes, is amended
56 | to read:

HB 331

2013

57 776.032 Immunity from criminal prosecution and civil
58 action for justifiable use of force.—

59 (1) A person who uses force as permitted in s. 776.012, s.
60 776.013, or s. 776.031 is justified in using such force and is
61 immune from criminal prosecution and civil action for the use of
62 such force, unless the person against whom force was used is a
63 law enforcement officer, as defined in s. 943.10(14), who was
64 acting in the performance of his or her official duties and the
65 officer identified himself or herself in accordance with any
66 applicable law or the person using force knew or reasonably
67 should have known that the person was a law enforcement officer.
68 As used in this subsection, the term "criminal prosecution"
69 ~~includes arresting, detaining in custody, and~~ means charging or
70 prosecuting the defendant.

71 (2) A law enforcement agency shall ~~may~~ use standard
72 procedures for investigating the use of force as described in
73 subsection (1), ~~but the agency may not arrest the person for~~
74 ~~using force unless it determines that there is probable cause~~
75 ~~that the force that was used was unlawful.~~

76 (3) The court may ~~shall~~ award reasonable attorney
77 ~~attorney's~~ fees, court costs, compensation for loss of income,
78 and all expenses incurred by the defendant in defense of any
79 civil action brought by a plaintiff if the court finds that the
80 defendant is immune from prosecution as provided in subsection
81 (1).

82 Section 3. Section 776.041, Florida Statutes, is amended
83 to read:

84 776.041 Use of force by aggressor.—The justification

85 | described in the preceding sections of this chapter is not
 86 | available to a person who:

87 | (1) Is attempting to commit, is committing, or is escaping
 88 | after the commission of, a forcible felony; ~~or~~

89 | (2) Initially provokes the use of force against himself or
 90 | herself; ~~unless:~~

91 | ~~(a) Such force is so great that the person reasonably~~
 92 | ~~believes that he or she is in imminent danger of death or great~~
 93 | ~~bodily harm and that he or she has exhausted every reasonable~~
 94 | ~~means to escape such danger other than the use of force which is~~
 95 | ~~likely to cause death or great bodily harm to the assailant; or~~

96 | ~~(b) In good faith, the person withdraws from physical~~
 97 | ~~contact with the assailant and indicates clearly to the~~
 98 | ~~assailant that he or she desires to withdraw and terminate the~~
 99 | ~~use of force, but the assailant continues or resumes the use of~~
 100 | ~~force.~~

101 | (3) Leaves a place of safety to place himself or herself
 102 | in proximity to a situation likely to result in a use of force;
 103 | or

104 | (4) Pursues an alleged trespasser or assailant after the
 105 | alleged trespasser or assailant has withdrawn or when the
 106 | incident that gave rise to a previous confrontation has ended.

107 | Section 4. Section 776.09, Florida Statutes, is created to
 108 | read:

109 | 776.09 Statewide system for reporting, tracking, and
 110 | disseminating information regarding self-defense claims and
 111 | claim resolutions.-

112 | (1) The Legislature finds that transparency regarding the

HB 331

2013

113 outcomes of investigations into claims regarding the justifiable
114 use of force is vital to the integrity of this state's law
115 enforcement function and to the public's understanding of
116 incidents and cases involving any alleged justifiable use of
117 force. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the residents
118 of this state to establish a statewide database to track all
119 justifiable use of force claims made in this state, including
120 decisions on whether to arrest or prosecute persons who claimed
121 to have justifiably used force as permitted in this chapter and
122 the reasons for the decisions.

123 (2) The Department of Law Enforcement shall collect,
124 process, maintain, and disseminate information and data on all
125 incidents concerning the alleged justifiable use of force in
126 this state. The department shall annually report to the
127 Legislature the information and data in a format and manner
128 determined by the Legislature.

129 (3) Each law enforcement agency within the state shall
130 monthly report to the department all incidents and cases in
131 which a claim regarding the justifiable use of force is raised,
132 from the time an initial claim is raised through the full
133 resolution of the claim or case.

134 Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2013.