

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 Criminal Justice

BILL: SB 376

INTRODUCER: Senator Hays

SUBJECT: Public Records Exemption/Names of Spouses & Children of Law Enforcement & Other Specified Agency Personnel

DATE: February 8, 2013 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Dugger	Cannon	CJ	Pre-meeting
2.	_____	_____	GO	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

SB 376 expands a public records exemption in s. 119.071(4)(d), F.S., which protects from public disclosure certain personal and identifying information of specified agency personnel and their spouses and children. The newly expanded exemption will include the names of spouses and children of active or former sworn or civilian law enforcement personnel, including Department of Corrections (DOC) officers and correctional probation officers, Department of Children and Families (DCF) abuse and exploitation investigators, Department of Health (DOH) child abuse investigators, and Department of Revenue (DOR) collection and enforcement personnel. The exemption is subject to legislative review and repeal under the provisions of the Open Government Sunset Review Act. The bill also contains a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

Because this bill expands a public records exemption, it requires a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature for passage.

This bill substantially amends section 119.071 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records Law

The State of Florida has a long history of providing public access to governmental records. The Florida Legislature enacted the first public records law in 1892.¹ One hundred years later, Floridians adopted an amendment to the State Constitution that raised the statutory right of access to public records to a constitutional level.² Article I, s. 24 of the State Constitution, provides that:

(a) Every person has the right to inspect or copy any public record made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or persons acting on their behalf, except with respect to records exempted pursuant to this section or specifically made confidential by this Constitution. This section specifically includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government and each agency or department created thereunder; counties, municipalities, and districts; and each constitutional officer, board, and commission, or entity created pursuant to law or this Constitution.

In addition to the State Constitution, the Public Records Act,³ which pre-dates the public records provision of the State Constitution, specifies conditions under which public access must be provided to records of an agency.⁴ Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S., states:

(a) Every person who has custody of a public record shall permit the record to be inspected and copied by any person desiring to do so, at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.

Unless specifically exempted, all agency records are available for public inspection. The term “public record” is broadly defined to mean:

. . . all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.⁵

The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted this definition to encompass all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business which are used to perpetuate,

¹ Section 1390, 1391 F.S. (Rev. 1892).

² Article I, s. 24, Fla. Constitution.

³ Chapter 119, F.S.

⁴ The word “agency” is defined in s. 119.011(2), F.S., to mean “. . . any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.” The Florida Constitution also establishes a right of access to any public record made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or persons acting on their behalf, except those records exempted by law or the state constitution.

⁵ Section 119.011(12), F.S.

communicate, or formalize knowledge.⁶ All such materials, regardless of whether they are in final form, are open for public inspection unless made exempt.⁷

Only the Legislature is authorized to create exemptions to open government requirements.⁸ Exemptions must be created by general law and such law must specifically state the public necessity justifying the exemption. Further, the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.⁹ A bill enacting an exemption¹⁰ may not contain other substantive provisions, although it may contain multiple exemptions that relate to one subject.¹¹

There is a difference between records that the Legislature has made exempt from public inspection and those that are *confidential* and exempt. If the Legislature makes a record confidential and exempt, such information may not be released by an agency to anyone other than to the persons or entities designated in the statute.¹² If a record is simply made exempt from disclosure requirements then an agency is not prohibited from disclosing the record in all circumstances.¹³

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (Act)¹⁴ provides for the systematic review, through a 5-year cycle ending October 2 of the 5th year following enactment, of an exemption from the Public Records Act or the Public Meetings Law. Each year, by June 1, the Division of Statutory Revision of the Office of Legislative Services is required to certify to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives the language and statutory citation of each exemption scheduled for repeal the following year.¹⁵

The Act states that an exemption may be created or expanded only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and if the exemption is no broader than necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption meets one of three specified criteria and if the Legislature finds that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption. An exemption meets the three statutory criteria if it:

- Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, whose administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;

⁶ *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Associates, Inc.*, 379 So.2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

⁷ *Wait v. Florida Power & Light Company*, 372 So.2d 420 (Fla. 1979).

⁸ Article I, s. 24(c), Fla. Constitution.

⁹ *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).

¹⁰ Under s. 119.15, F.S., an existing exemption may be considered a new exemption if the exemption is expanded to cover additional records.

¹¹ Art. I, s. 24(c), Fla. Constitution.

¹² Attorney General Opinion 85-62.

¹³ *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 683, 687 (Fla. 5th DCA), review denied, 589 So.2d 289 (Fla. 1991).

¹⁴ Section 119.15, F.S.

¹⁵ Section 119.15(5)(a), F.S.

- Protects information of a sensitive, personal nature concerning individuals, the release of which would be defamatory or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of such individuals, or would jeopardize their safety; 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 that is used to protect or further a business advantage over those who do not know or use it, the disclosure of which would injure the affected entity in the marketplace.¹⁶

The Act also requires the Legislature to consider six questions that go to the scope, public purpose, and necessity of the exemption.¹⁷

Current Exemptions Relating to Agency Personnel in s. 119.071(4)(d), F.S.

Section 119.071(4)(d), F.S., currently provides public records exemptions for specified personal identifying and locating information of the following current and former agency personnel, as well as for specified personal identifying and locating information of their spouses and children, including the following:

- Law enforcement and specified agency investigative personnel;¹⁸
- Certified firefighters;
- Justices and judges;
- Local and statewide prosecuting attorneys;
- Magistrates, administrative law judges, and child support hearing officers;
- Local government agency and water management district human resources administrators;
- Code enforcement officers;
- Guardians ad litem;
- Department of Juvenile Justice direct-care personnel;
- Public defenders and criminal conflict and civil regional counsel;
- Department of Business and Professional Regulation investigators and inspectors; and
- County tax collectors.

¹⁶ Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. These questions are as follows:

- 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?
- 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?

¹⁸ Included in this category are the following: active or former sworn or civilian law enforcement personnel, including DOC officers and correctional probation officers, DCF abuse and exploitation investigators, DOH child abuse investigators, and DOR collection and enforcement personnel.

Although there is some inconsistency among the types of information exempted,¹⁹ all of the exemptions protect the following information:

- The home addresses and telephone numbers of the agency personnel;
- The home addresses, telephone numbers, and places of employment of the spouses and children of the agency personnel; and
- The names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of the agency personnel.

Six of the exemptions protect the names of the following agency personnel's spouses and children:

- Local government agency and water management district human resources administrators;
- Code enforcement officers;
- Guardians ad Litem;
- Department of Juvenile Justice direct-care personnel;
- Department of Business and Professional Regulation inspectors and investigators; and
- County tax collectors.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill expands the public records exemption in s. 119.071(4)(d), F.S., which protects from public disclosure certain personal and identifying information of specified agency personnel and their spouses and children. The newly expanded exemption will include the names of spouses and children of active or former sworn or civilian law enforcement personnel, including DOC officers and correctional probation officers, DCF abuse and exploitation investigators, DOH child abuse investigators, and DOR collection and enforcement personnel. (There are currently six other exemptions in this section that protect the names of spouses and children.)

The exemption is subject to legislative review and repeal under the provisions of the Open Government Sunset Review Act and as such, stands repealed October 2, 2018, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by reenactment of the Legislature.

The bill also contains a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution. It provides that the exemption is necessary to protect these sworn and civilian law enforcement personnel and other specified agency investigative personnel who because of their job responsibilities often come into close contact with persons who want to harm them or their families. The public necessity statement further provides that the resulting harm from releasing the names of spouses and children outweighs the public benefit of disclosing them.

¹⁹ Some of the exemptions also protect photographs, dates of birth, and names of agency personnel and their spouses and children.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**Vote Requirement**

Article I, s. 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a newly created or expanded public records or open meetings exemption to pass by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house. Because this bill expands a public records exemption, a two-thirds vote is required.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding a public records or open meetings exemption to contain a public necessity statement. Because this bill expands a public records exemption, it does contain a public necessity statement.

Single Subject Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding a public records or open meetings exemption to contain no other substantive provisions. Because this bill expands a public records exemption, it does not contain other substantive provisions.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a newly created or expanded public records or open meetings exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. This bill expands a public records exemption by including the names of spouses and children of specified agency personnel in the existing exemption that protects certain personal and identifying information. The public necessity statement provides that the exemption is necessary to protect those sworn and civilian law enforcement personnel and other specified investigative agency personnel who because of their job responsibilities often come into close contact with persons who want to harm them or their families. The public necessity statement further provides that the harm of releasing the names of spouses and children outweighs the public benefit of disclosing them.

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:

An amendment is recommended on page 2, line 51, clarifying that the other specified agency personnel covered in the current exemption are also included in the expanded exemption.

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.