

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability

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BILL: SB 1262

INTRODUCER: Senator Brandes

SUBJECT: Public Records and Meetings/Insurance Flood Loss Model

DATE: March 25, 2014

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Matiyow</u>	<u>Knudson</u>	<u>BI</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Kim</u>	<u>McVaney</u>	<u>GO</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

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## I. Summary:

SB 1262 makes confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution:

- Trade secrets used in designing and constructing flood loss models that are provided to the Florida Commission on Hurricane Loss Projection Methodology (methodology commission), the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR), or the consumer advocate under s. 627.0628, F.S.
- The portion of a meeting by the methodology commission or a rate filing by an insurer in which trade secrets pertaining to flood models are discussed.

The bill is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act in accordance with s. 119.15, F.S., and shall stand repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Because this bill expands existing public records and public meetings exemptions, the bill provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution. A two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature is required for passage.

## II. Present Situation:

### Public Records Laws

The Florida Constitution provides every person 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 of persons acting on their behalf.<sup>1</sup> The records of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches are specifically included.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

The Florida Statutes also specify conditions under which public access must be provided to government records. The Public Records Act<sup>3</sup> guarantees every person's right to inspect and copy any state or local government public record<sup>4</sup> at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.<sup>5</sup>

Only the Legislature may create an exemption to public records requirements.<sup>6</sup> Such an exemption must be created by general law and must specifically state the public necessity justifying the exemption.<sup>7</sup> Further, the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. A bill enacting an exemption may not contain other substantive provisions<sup>8</sup> and must pass by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature.<sup>9</sup>

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (the Act) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or open meetings exemptions.<sup>10</sup> It requires the automatic repeal of such exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.<sup>11</sup> The Act provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary to meet such public purpose.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 119, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines "public records" 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." Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines "agency" to mean as "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 Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records (*see Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So.2d 32 (Fla. 1992)).

<sup>5</sup> Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c). There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public records requirements and those the Legislature designates *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 (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 2004); and *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).

<sup>7</sup> FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>8</sup> The bill may, however, contain multiple exemptions that relate to one subject.

<sup>9</sup> FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>10</sup> Section 119.15, F.S. An exemption is substantially amended if the amendment expands the scope of the exemption to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records (s. 119.15(4)(b), F.S.). The requirements of the Act do not apply to an exemption that is required by federal law or that applies solely to the Legislature or the State Court System (s. 119.15(2), F.S.).

<sup>11</sup> Section 119.15(3), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

## Florida Commission on Hurricane Loss Projection Methodology

In 1995, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Commission on Hurricane Loss Projection Methodology (methodology commission), under s. 627.0628, F.S., which describes the legislative intent “to encourage the use of the most sophisticated actuarial methods to assure that consumers are charged lawful rates for residential property insurance coverage.”<sup>13</sup> The commission is administratively housed within the State Board of Administration, but independently exercises its powers and duties as specified in the statute.

A number of vendors produce highly complex computer models that purport to reflect an average annual expected loss from hurricanes and other perils. Models of this nature are driven by an array of internal assumptions, within a variety of scientific disciplines (e.g., meteorology, structural engineering, actuarial science, statistics, computer science). Although some basic assumptions may be common to more than one model, many of the detailed internal assumptions have been developed only after considerable research by each vendor, which closely guards that information as a trade secret. If all internal information of a model were published, that model could be replicated, and the vendor that produced the model would lose the entirety of its value.

Initially, s. 627.0628, F.S., did not contain an exemption from public records or public meetings. Accordingly, the methodology commission undertook a process to evaluate the participating computer models, which contained proprietary information, without the ability to exempt either records or meetings from full public disclosure. The methodology commission first established detailed standards that a model was required to meet in order to obtain approval. For the portion of the model that was nonproprietary, the methodology commission members questioned the vendor in open meetings; for the portion that was proprietary, the methodology commission hired a “professional team” of experts which went on-site to determine whether the model met the applicable standards, and reported its findings to the methodology commission in an open hearing.

In 2005, the Legislature enacted s. 627.0628(3)(f), which pertains to public records exemptions for the methodology commission.<sup>14</sup> The public records exemptions are:

- Section 627.0628(3)(f)1., F.S., which provides that trade secrets used in designing and constructing a hurricane loss model and submitted by a private company to the methodology commission, the OIR, or the consumer advocate are confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.
- Section 627.0628(3)(f)2., F.S., which provides that a portion of a meeting of the methodology commission or of a rate proceeding at which trade secrets used in designing and constructing a hurricane loss model are discussed is exempt from s. 286.011, F.S., and s. 24(b), Art. I of the State Constitution.

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 95-276, s. 6, Laws of Fla.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter, 2005-264, s 3, Laws of Fla.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill expands the existing public records exemption for hurricane loss models to include flood loss models.<sup>15</sup> Trade secrets used in designing and constructing flood loss models will be confidential and exempt from public records.

Current law also provides that portions of public meetings of the commission or a rate proceeding when trade secrets are discussed are exempt from public records. Exempt portions must be recorded and the recordings are exempt from public disclosure.<sup>16</sup>

By expanding the public records exemption for trade secrets to flood loss models, the public meetings exemption is also being expanded by operation of law.

The public records exemptions for the hurricane and flood loss models, as well as the related public meetings exemptions for trade secrets, will stand repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Because this bill expands existing public records and public meetings exemptions, the bill also provides a statement of public necessity explaining the public necessity for both exemptions as required by the State Constitution.

The bill shall take effect upon becoming a law if SB 542 or similar legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

#### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Section 24(c), Art. I of the Florida Constitution requires a newly created public records exemption to pass by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature. This bill expands existing public records and public meetings exemptions; therefore, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

Section 24(c), Art. I of the Florida Constitution requires a law creating a new public records exemption to contain a public necessity statement justifying the exemption. This bill expands existing public records and public meetings exemptions; therefore, it contains a public necessity statement explaining the public necessity for both exemptions.

#### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

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<sup>15</sup> Section 627.0628(3)(f)1., F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 627.0682(3)(f)2.a., F.S.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

The exemptions will allow private vendors that produce models that project expected losses from flood to participate in the processes of the methodology commission without concern that its model will be replicated.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The exemptions will allow members of the methodology commission, the Office of Insurance Regulation, and the consumer advocate to have access to all information underlying the models that project flood losses.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 627.0628 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.