

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 Communications, Energy, and Public Utilities

BILL: SB 366

INTRODUCER: Senator Brandes

SUBJECT: Public Records/Trade Secrets/Computers

DATE: January 23, 2014

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Wiehle	Caldwell	CU	Pre-meeting
2.			CJ	
3.			GO	
4.			RC	

I. Summary:

SB 366 expands an existing public records exemption for data, programs, or supporting documentation that contain trade secrets as defined in s. 812.081, F.S., reside or exist internal or external to a computer, computer system, or computer network, and are held by an agency. The exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will automatically repeal on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature.

The bill contains a statement of public necessity as required by the Florida Constitution.

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

II. Present Situation:

Florida's Public Records Law

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.¹ The records of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches are specifically included.²

The Florida Statutes also specify conditions under which public access must be provided to government records. The Public Records Act³ guarantees every person's right to inspect and

¹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

² *Id.*

³ Chapter 119, F.S.

copy any state or local government public record⁴ at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.⁵

Only the Legislature may create an exemption to public records requirements.⁶ Such an exemption must be created by general law and must specifically state the public necessity justifying the exemption.⁷ 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 provisions⁸ and must pass by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature.⁹

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹²

Offenses against intellectual property; public records exemption

Section 815.04(3), F.S., makes data, programs, or supporting documentation that are a trade secret as defined in s. 812.081, F.S., reside or exist internal or external to a computer, computer system, or computer network, and are held by an agency as defined in chapter 119, confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State

⁴ 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)).

⁵ Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

⁶ 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).

⁷ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

⁸ The bill may, however, contain multiple exemptions that relate to one subject.

⁹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁰ 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.).

¹¹ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

¹² Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

Constitution. A person who willfully, knowingly, and without authorization discloses or takes such information commits an offense against intellectual property.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 815.04(3), F.S., to include protections for information held on electronic devices.¹³ The bill makes this subsection subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and provides that it is automatically repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature prior to that date.

The bill contains a finding of public necessity for this exemption. It states that it is a public necessity that trade secrets and intellectual property be protected from disclosure by persons gaining unauthorized access into computer networks and electronic devices. Trade secrets and intellectual property are already afforded public records exemptions because of the immense importance of this type of proprietary information to the economic competition between this state and other states and nations. As technology continues to evolve, it is important that the existing public records exemption for trade secrets and intellectual property expand accordingly to encompass new technology used in association with sensitive trade secrets and intellectual property. Thus the Legislature declares that it is a public necessity that data, programs, and supporting documentation that are trade secrets, are held by an agency and reside or exist internal or external to a computer, computer system, computer network, or electronic device be confidential and exempt from the requirements of s. 119.07(1), F.S., and s. 24(a), Article I of the State Constitution.

The bill takes effect on the same date that SB 364 or similar legislation takes effect, if such 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:

The Florida Constitution provides that 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.¹⁴ However, the Legislature may provide for the exemption of records from these requirements by general law passed by a two-thirds vote of each house, provided that such law shall state with specificity the public necessity justifying the

¹³ The term “electronic devices” is defined in a related bill, SB 364, to mean a device that is capable of communicating across a computer network with other computers or devices for the purpose of transmitting, receiving, or storing data.

¹⁴ Art. I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution.

exemption and shall be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.¹⁵ Such laws may contain only exemptions from these requirements and must relate to one subject.¹⁶

The bill appears to meet the constitutional requirements as it appears to: contain the required statement of public necessity, be no broader than necessary, contain only the exemption from public records laws, and relate to one subject. It requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature for passage.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Those persons who have trade secrets contained in documents held by agencies on computers and electronic devices will be better protected.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends s. 815.04 of the Florida Statutes.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

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.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
