

HB 719

2014

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to the Florida Ethics Center;
3 establishing the mission and duties of the center;
4 creating the Florida Ethics Center within the Office
5 of Chief Inspector General in the Executive Office of
6 the Governor; requiring that the center be located in
7 the Capitol Complex; providing for appropriations;
8 providing an effective date.
9

10 WHEREAS, the viability and vitality of our constitutional
11 form of government, the beacon of hope for many people
12 throughout many generations, requires a steadfast adherence to
13 the principles of honesty, integrity, truth, trust, and
14 transparency in public service for the good of our citizens, and

15 WHEREAS, our representative democracy cannot endure without
16 the engagement of the people with their elected officials, and

17 WHEREAS, civil engagement is fostered by goodwill, honesty,
18 and transparency, must be free from corrupting conflicts of
19 interest and self-dealing, and must nurture deep understanding
20 of the responsibilities of public service, and

21 WHEREAS, Florida, as one of the largest, most diverse, and
22 prosperous states, has the opportunity and responsibility to
23 lead within the ranks of the United States, and

24 WHEREAS, there must be a concerted effort to forge a path
25 to a higher level of ethical leadership and stewardship of
26 public trust and restore trust in government to the people of

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27 | this great state, and

28 | WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of state government to
 29 | make government honest, transparent, uncorrupted, and free from
 30 | undue influence as evidenced by the very existence of the
 31 | offices of inspectors general, the Commission on Ethics, cases
 32 | brought by state attorneys, and the many laws, rules, and
 33 | regulations developed throughout the years to address illegal
 34 | and unethical activity in government, and

35 | WHEREAS, knowledge, study, robust debate, and the
 36 | contemplation of issues helps to create the sunshine of
 37 | understanding and truth and can make changes in attitudes,
 38 | approach, and actions that cannot be done by law and its process
 39 | alone, NOW, THEREFORE,

40 |

41 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

42 |

43 | Section 1. (1) This act may be cited as the "Florida
 44 | Ethics Center Act."

45 | (2) The mission of the Florida Ethics Center is to help
 46 | electd officials, those seeking office, and others who interact
 47 | with government to have the opportunity to study applied ethics
 48 | and the impact of conflicts of interest and examine issues that
 49 | will help disseminate a deep understanding of ethics as they are
 50 | applied to government, to business interests, and for the good
 51 | of the state and its people.

52 | (3) The Florida Ethics Center shall:

53 (a) Train and educate candidates and elected and appointed
54 officials in state and local government about ethics issues that
55 arise in government, the relationships among business interests,
56 and issues that promote the public good.

57 (b) Be available to other states and their local
58 governments as a training, education, and study center. This
59 will allow Florida to emerge as a leader among the states in
60 good and ethical government practice and would offset the costs
61 of operating the center.

62 (c) Fund two resident scholar positions selected from
63 preeminent universities in this state.

64 (d) Fund three rotating positions for ethics scholars from
65 state colleges and universities.

66 (e) Fund visiting scholars and lecturers who periodically
67 make presentations on ethical issues.

68 (f) Fund and produce an online newsletter and journal to
69 disseminate applied ethics and civic engagement knowledge and to
70 encourage study, discussion, and debate. The costs of producing
71 these publications may be offset by subscription income derived
72 from entities and individuals beyond state and local
73 governments.

74 (g) Fund and create an annual national and international
75 conference on government ethics.

76 (h) Provide for the distribution of pamphlets, training
77 materials, and online training for the use of elected officials
78 and candidates of this state and other states to train and learn

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79 about government and applied ethics. The proceeds raised from
80 selling materials or offering online or traditional courses to
81 entities outside of this state may be used to offset the costs
82 of the production of materials and for the benefit of the
83 Florida Ethics Center.

84 (i) Provide for adequate staffing and supervision of the
85 center's functions.

86 (4) The Florida Ethics Center is created within the Office
87 of Chief Inspector General in the Executive Office of the
88 Governor. It shall be prominently situated within the Capitol
89 Complex to take advantage of the Capitol location for simulated
90 training sessions. The center shall be designated with clear
91 signage for easy location and for recognition as an integral
92 part of the Capitol Complex.

93 (5) The Florida Ethics Center shall be funded annually by
94 the Legislature.

95 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2014.