

**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 Fiscal Policy

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BILL: CS/SB 626

INTRODUCER: Banking and Insurance Committee and Senators Gaetz and Altman

SUBJECT: Consumer Credit

DATE: January 13, 2016

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

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	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Johnson</u>	<u>Knudson</u>	<u>BI</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>Ryon</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
3.	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Hrdlicka</u>	<u>FP</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 626 authorizes the Office of Financial Regulation to enforce the provisions of the federal Military Lending Act (MLA) for state financial institutions, deferred presentment providers (payday lenders), consumer finance lenders, title loan lenders. The MLA provides greater consumer protections for service members and their dependents in connection with a broad range of consumer credit transactions, including consumer finance loans, payday loans, title loans, overdraft lines of credit, small dollar loans, and credit card accounts.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Federal Consumer Protection Laws**

***Federal Truth in Lending Act***

The purpose of the Truth in Lending Act (TILA) is to promote the informed use of credit through “a meaningful disclosure of credit terms so that the consumer will be able to compare more readily the various credit terms available.”<sup>1</sup> Regulation Z, which implements the TILA, requires the calculation and disclosure of the Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for consumer loans.<sup>2</sup> Lines

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<sup>1</sup> 15 U.S.C. s. 1601(a). TILA is codified at 15 U.S.C. s. 1601 *et seq.*, as implemented by Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. pt. 226.

<sup>2</sup> 15 U.S.C. s. 1604-1606.

of consumer credit covered by the TILA include mortgage loans, home equity lines of credit, reverse mortgages, open-end credit, certain student loans, and installment loans.<sup>3</sup>

### **State Regulation of Consumer Lending**

The Florida Office of Financial Regulation (OFR) has regulatory oversight of state-chartered financial institutions, securities brokers, investment advisers, mortgage loan originators, deferred presentment providers or payday loan lenders, consumer finance companies, title loan lenders, debt collectors, and other financial service entities.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Regulation of State Financial Institutions***

The Division of Financial Institutions of the OFR charters and regulates entities that engage in financial institution business in Florida in accordance with the Florida Financial Institutions Codes (codes).<sup>5</sup> The OFR may examine, investigate, and take disciplinary actions against state-chartered financial institutions for violation of the codes.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Consumer Finance Loans***

The Florida Consumer Finance Act, codified in ch. 516, F.S., sets forth licensing requirements for consumer finance lenders and the terms and conditions under which a consumer loan is authorized in Florida. The act sets maximum interest rates for a consumer finance loan, which is a loan of money, credit, goods, or a provision of a line of credit, in an amount or to a value of \$25,000 or less at an interest rate greater than 18 percent per year.<sup>7</sup> The maximum allowable interest rates on consumer finance loans are tiered and limited based on the principal amount that falls within each tier of the loan, as provided below:

- 30 percent a year, computed on the first \$3,000 of the principal amount;
- 24 percent a year on that part of principal between \$3,001 and \$4,000; and
- 18 percent a year on that part of principal between \$4,001 and \$25,000.<sup>8</sup>

These principal amounts are the same as the amounts financed by the TILA and Regulation Z.<sup>9</sup> The APR for all loans under the act may equal, but cannot exceed, the APR for the loan as required to be computed and disclosed by the TILA and Regulation Z.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the applicable interest rates described above, Florida law allows consumer finance lenders to charge borrowers the following charges and fees:

- Up to \$25 for investigating the credit and character of the borrower;

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<sup>3</sup> Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *eRegulations: 12 CFR Part 1026 (Regulation Z)*, available at <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/eregulations/1026> (last visited Jan. 5, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Florida Office of Financial Regulation, *About OFR*, available at <http://www.flofr.com/StaticPages/AboutOFR.htm> (last visited Jan. 5, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Chapters 655, 657, 658, 660, 663, 665, and 667, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> These entities are also subject to laws and regulation by various federal entities. For example, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) supervises state-chartered banks that are not members of the Federal Reserve System and state-chartered savings associations. The FDIC also insures deposits in banks and savings associations in the event of bank failure. The Federal Reserve Board supervises state-chartered banks that are members of the Federal Reserve System.

<sup>7</sup> Section 516.01(2), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 516.031(1), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Section 516.031(2), F.S.

- A \$25 annual fee on the anniversary date of each line-of-credit account;
- Brokerage fees for certain loans and appraisals of real property offered as security;
- Intangible personal property tax, if secured by a loan note on real property;
- Documentary excise tax and lawful fees for public filing, recoding, and the like;
- Insurance premiums;
- Actual and reasonable attorney fees and court costs;
- Actual and commercially reasonable expenses for recovering the collateral property;
- Delinquency charges of up to \$15 for each payment in default for at least 10 days, if agreed upon in writing before the charge is imposed; and
- A dishonored check charge of up to \$20.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Title Loans***

The Florida Title Loan Act, codified in ch. 537, F.S., sets forth licensing requirements for title loan lenders and the terms and conditions for a title loan authorized in Florida. A title loan is secured through transfer of a motor vehicle certificate of title, with the loan amount dependent on the vehicle's value. Title lenders charge tiered interest rates based on the principal amount, which is calculated and disclosed pursuant to Regulation Z.<sup>12</sup> The maturity date of a title loan is 30 days after the agreement date, but can be extended for one or more 30-day periods by mutual consent of the lender and the borrower.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Deferred Presentment Transactions or Payday Loans***

Part IV of ch. 560, F.S., regulates deferred presentment providers (or payday loan lenders) and deferred presentment transactions. A deferred presentment transaction, or "payday loan", is a loan where a person exchanges a check, like a paycheck, up to \$500 in exchange for currency or a payment instrument (e.g., electronic funds transfer, check, or money order) and the lender agrees to hold the check for a specified period of time before depositing or redeeming the check.<sup>14</sup>

Repayment terms range from a minimum of 7 days to a maximum of 31 days. The maximum allowable fees are 10 percent of the currency or payment instrument provided, as well as a verification fee of up to \$5 per transaction.<sup>15</sup> For each transaction, the deferred presentment provider must comply with the disclosure requirements of Regulation Z. Borrowers may have only one active payday loan at a time, but may secure a new loan 24 hours after paying off the original loan.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Section 516.031(3), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> The interest rate tiers are: 30 percent a year, computed on the first \$2,000 of the principal amount; 24 percent a year on the part of the principal between \$2,001 and \$3,000; and 18 percent a year on the part of the principal exceeding \$3,001. *See* s. 537.011(1), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 537.011(3), F.S.

<sup>14</sup> *See* Florida Office of Financial Regulation, *Deferred Presentment Provider*, available at <http://www.flofr.com/StaticPages/DeferredPresentmentProvider.htm> (last visited Jan. 5, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Sections 560.309(8) and 560.404, F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Section 560.404, F.S.

## Consumer Debt and the Military

According to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), service members, particularly younger members, have limited money management skills and are generally unprepared for their financial responsibilities prior to entering the military. Forty-one percent of service members reported using one or more sources of small dollar lending in the past 12 months. These small dollar loans included payday, vehicle title, bank deposit advance, pawn shop, cash advances on credit cards, overdraft loans, overdraft lines of credit, overdraft protection from other accounts, relief society loans, and loans from friends and family. Further, 47 percent of service members reported difficulty managing their finances within the last 12 months.<sup>17</sup>

The DoD expects service members “to maintain personal readiness standards, including paying their debts and maintaining their ability to attend to the financial needs of their families.” Losing qualified service members due to personal issues, such as financial instability, costs the DoD approximately \$58,250 per service member.<sup>18</sup>

### *Federal Military Lending Act*

Congress enacted the Military Lending Act (MLA) in 2006 to provide covered service members and their dependents with specific protections for their consumer credit transactions.<sup>19</sup> A covered borrower is defined as a member of the armed forces who is on active duty for more than 30 days, or on active Guard and Reserve Duty.<sup>20</sup> Covered dependents include the spouse, child,<sup>21</sup> or an individual who the member provided more than one-half of the individual’s support for more than 180 days immediately preceding an extension of consumer credit.<sup>22</sup>

The MLA applies only to the following “consumer credit” transactions of covered borrowers:

- Closed-end payday loans for no more than \$2,000 and with a term of 91 days or fewer;
- Closed-end vehicle title loans with a term of 181 days or less; and
- Closed-end tax refund anticipation loans.<sup>23</sup>

The DoD believed the narrow definition of “consumer credit” allowed creditors to structure their products in order to reduce or avoid altogether the obligations of the MLA.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the DoD significantly amended the regulations enforcing the MLA beginning generally in October 2016.<sup>25</sup> The definition of consumer credit is expanded to include credit consistently subject to the TILA.

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<sup>17</sup> Limitations on Terms of Consumer Credit Extended to Service Members and Dependents, 79 Fed Reg. 58602, at 58604 (Sept. 29, 2014), available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-09-29/pdf/2014-22900.pdf> (last visited Jan. 6, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Limitations on Terms of Consumer Credit Extended to Service Members and Dependents, 80 FR 43560, at 43564-43565 (July 22, 2015), available at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-07-22/pdf/2015-17480.pdf> (last visited Jan. 6, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> 10 U.S.C. s. 987 and 32 C.F.R. pt. 232.

<sup>20</sup> 10 U.S.C. s. 987(i)(1).

<sup>21</sup> As defined in 38 U.S.C. s. 101(4).

<sup>22</sup> 10 U.S.C. s. 987(i)(2).

<sup>23</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.3.

<sup>24</sup> *Supra* note 17 at 58603.

<sup>25</sup> The effective date of the final rule is October 1, 2015. Generally, compliance is required by October 3, 2016, for credit established on or after that date. The rule provides a temporary exemption for credit card accounts under an open-end consumer credit plan until October 3, 2017. *See* 32 C.F.R. 232.12.

The MLA regulations outline terms and conditions relating to the extension of consumer credit to a covered borrower:

- Caps the annual percentage rate of interest, known as the Military Annual Percentage Rate (MAPR), at 36 percent;<sup>26</sup>
- Mandates certain disclosures (*e.g.*, a statement of the MAPR and disclosures consistent with TILA) before a loan is made;<sup>27</sup>
- Prohibits prepayment penalty fees;
- Prohibits a creditor from “rolling-over” or refinancing the same loan with exceptions for depository institutions;
- Prohibits a creditor from requiring the covered borrower to submit to arbitration in the event of a dispute;
- Prohibits a creditor from requiring a covered borrower to waive his or her rights under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act;<sup>28</sup>
- Prohibits mandatory allotments to repay the loan as a condition for receiving the loan;
- Prohibits a creditor from using the title of a vehicle as security for the obligation involving the consumer credit with exceptions for depository institutions; and
- Prohibits a creditor from using a check to access a financial account of covered borrower except in connection with a consumer credit transaction with an MAPR consistent with federal regulations.<sup>29</sup>

Penalties and remedies are provided for covered borrowers, included enforcement provisions that permit a covered borrower to recover damages from a creditor who violates a requirement of the MLA.<sup>30</sup> Any credit agreement that fails to comply with the MLA regulations or contains one or more prohibited provisions under the regulations is void from the inception of the contract.<sup>31</sup>

A creditor is not required to check to determine if a consumer is a covered borrower under the MLA. However, the MLA provides a safe harbor for creditors who do check the status of the consumer consistent with methods approved by the MLA. Creditors may use either a DoD MLA database or consumer reports from a nationwide consumer reporting agency.<sup>32</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** authorizes the OFR to deny an application for a consumer finance license or take disciplinary action against a consumer finance lender for violating any provision of the MLA or the federal regulations implementing the MLA in connection with a consumer finance loan made under ch. 516, F.S. (**amending s. 516.07, F.S.**). For example, ch. 516, F.S., prescribes the calculation of the APR or interest cap pursuant to Regulation Z. The rate cap for loans made to

<sup>26</sup> For covered borrowers, the cost of such consumer credit is capped at the MAPR of 36 percent. The MAPR is calculated based on Regulation Z and also includes other costs, such as credit insurance premiums, and other specified fees. *See* 32 C.F.R. 232.4.

<sup>27</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.6.

<sup>28</sup> The act provides for the temporary suspension of judicial and administrative proceedings and transactions that may adversely affect the civil rights of service members during their military service. 50 U.S.C. App. 501 *et. seq.*

<sup>29</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.8.

<sup>30</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.9.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.5. The database is available at <https://mla.dmdc.osd.mil> (last visited Jan. 9, 2016).

the service members and their dependents is capped at 36 percent MAPR. The MAPR is calculated pursuant to the MLA, which requires the inclusion of additional fees and insurance products that are not included under Regulation Z.

**Section 2** provides that a violation of any provision of the MLA or the federal regulations implementing the MLA in connection with a title loan made under ch. 537, F.S., is a prohibited act. This authorizes the OFR to take disciplinary action against a title loan lender or any agent or employee of a title loan lender (**amending s. 537.013, F.S.**).

**Section 3** authorizes the OFR to take disciplinary action against a money services business, authorized vendor, or affiliated party that violates any provision of the MLA or the federal regulations implementing the MLA in connection with a deferred presentment transaction (payday loan) conducted under part IV of ch. 560, F.S. (**amending s. 560.114, F.S.**).

**Section 4** authorizes the OFR to conduct an investigation to determine whether a financial institution, a subsidiary, a service corporation, an affiliate, or other person is engaging in or has engaged in conduct that is a violation of any provision of the MLA or the federal regulations implementing the MLA (**amending s. 655.035, F.S.**). If the OFR has reason to believe that a person has violated any such provision or regulation, the OFR may initiate a proceeding against such person in accordance with s. 655.033 (cease and desist orders), s. 655.034 (injunctive relief), s. 655.037 (removal of a financial institution affiliated party), or s. 655.041 (administrative fines and enforcement), F.S., of the Financial Institution Codes.

**Section 5** provides that the bill applies to a consumer credit transaction or account for consumer credit established on or after October 3, 2016. The bill does not apply to a credit card account exempted under 32 C.F.R. s. 232.13(c) until the exemption expires. The MLA implementing regulations under 32 C.F.R. part 232 became effective October 1, 2015; however, compliance is only required for consumer credit transactions began or established on or after October 3, 2016. A limited exemption is provided for credit card accounts that delays compliance until October 3, 2017, which may be extended by the DoD until October 3, 2018.<sup>33</sup>

**Section 6** provides an effective date of October 3, 2016.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

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

None.

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

None.

##### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

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<sup>33</sup> 32 C.F.R. 232.13.

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

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

By authorizing the OFR to enforce the MLA and federal regulations implementing the MLA, service members and their dependents will be provided greater consumer protections in connection with consumer credit transactions in Florida.

Additionally, while a business must already meet the requirements of the bill, a business could be subject to penalties under state law for violations.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

According to the OFR, the Division of Consumer Finance would incur additional duties and responsibilities to enforce the MLA and would need two additional FTEs to absorb the added duties. Salaries and benefits for two positions would total \$126,132.<sup>34</sup>

Any positive fiscal impact due to the ability of the OFR to enforce penalties, including fines, is indeterminate at this time.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 516.07, 537.013, and 560.114.

This bill creates section 655.035 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)**CS by Banking and Insurance on November 17, 2015:**

In addition to issuing a cease and desist order, the CS also authorizes the OFR to seek

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<sup>34</sup> Office of Financial Regulation, *SB 626 Agency Bill Analysis*, (Oct. 3, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security).

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injunctive relief, to remove a financial-institution-affiliated party, and to impose administrative fines against any financial institution, a subsidiary, a service corporation, an affiliate, or other person subject to the Financial Institutions Code that violates the MLA or the implementing regulations.

**B. Amendments:**

None.