

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

**BILL #:** CS/HB 411 Public Records and Public Meetings/Firesafety Systems  
**SPONSOR(S):** Government Accountability Committee; Clemons, Sr. and others  
**TIED BILLS:** IDEN./SIM. **BILLS:** SB 738

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Oversight, Transparency & Administration Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	Moore	Harrington
2) Government Accountability Committee	21 Y, 0 N, As CS	Moore	Williamson

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Current law provides public record and public meeting exemptions for certain information related to security systems. A security system plan or any portion thereof and any information relating to security systems held by an agency is confidential and exempt from public record requirements if the plan or information is for:

- Any property owned by or leased to the state or any of its political subdivisions; or
- Any privately owned or leased property.

An agency is authorized to disclose the confidential and exempt information:

- To the property owner or leaseholder;
- In furtherance of the official duties and responsibilities of the agency holding the information;
- To another local, state, or federal agency in furtherance of that agency's official duties and responsibilities; or
- Upon a showing of good cause before a court of competent jurisdiction.

Any portion of a meeting that would reveal a security system plan or portion thereof or information relating to a security system is exempt from public meeting requirements.

The bill creates public record and public meeting exemptions for firesafety system plans and information relating to firesafety systems that are identical to the exemptions currently in law for security system plans and information relating to security systems. The bill provides for repeal of the exemptions on October 2, 2023, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature. The bill provides a public necessity statement as required by the State Constitution.

The bill may have a minimal fiscal impact on the state and local governments. See Fiscal Comments section.

**Article I, s. 24(c) of the Florida Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created or expanded public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.**

## FULL ANALYSIS

### I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

#### A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

##### **Background**

###### Public Records Law

Article I, s. 24(a) of the Florida Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government records. This section guarantees every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

Public policy regarding access to government records is addressed further in s. 119.07(1)(a), F.S., which guarantees every person a right to inspect and copy any state, county, or municipal record.

###### Public Meetings Law

Article I, s. 24(b) of the Florida Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government meetings. The section requires that all meetings of any collegial public body of the executive branch of state government or of any collegial public body of a county, municipality, school district, or special district, at which official acts are to be taken or at which public business of such body is to be transacted or discussed, be open and noticed to the public.

Public policy regarding access to government meetings also is addressed in the Florida Statutes. Section 286.011, F.S., known as the "Government in the Sunshine Law" or "Sunshine Law," further requires that all meetings of any board or commission of any state agency or authority or of any agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision, at which official acts are to be taken be open to the public at all times.<sup>1</sup> The board or commission must provide reasonable notice of all public meetings.<sup>2</sup> Public meetings may not be held at any location that discriminates on the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, origin, or economic status or that operates in a manner that unreasonably restricts the public's access to the facility.<sup>3</sup> Minutes of a public meeting must be promptly recorded and open to public inspection.<sup>4</sup>

###### Public Record and Public Meeting Exemptions

The Legislature may provide by general law for the exemption of records and meetings from the requirements of Article I, s. 24(a) and (b) of the Florida Constitution.<sup>5</sup> The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption<sup>6</sup> and must be no more broad than necessary to accomplish its purpose.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the Open Government Sunset Review Act<sup>8</sup> provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. In addition, it may be no more broad than necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- Allow the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 286.011(1), F.S.

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

<sup>3</sup> Section 286.011(6), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 286.011(2), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>6</sup> This portion of a public record or public meeting exemption is commonly referred to as a "public necessity statement."

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

<sup>8</sup> Section 119.15, F.S.

- Protect sensitive personal information that, if released, would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety; however, only the identity of an individual may be exempted under this provision.
- Protect trade or business secrets.<sup>9</sup>

The Act also requires the automatic repeal of a public record or public meeting exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after its creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.<sup>10</sup>

### Public Record and Public Meeting Exemptions Related to Security Systems

Current law provides public record and public meeting exemptions for certain information related to security systems. The law specifies the circumstances under which the information may be disclosed and to whom it may be disclosed.

#### *Security System Plans*

Section 119.071(3)(a)1., F.S., defines "security system plan" to include all:

- Records, information, photographs, audio and visual presentations, schematic diagrams, surveys, recommendations, or consultations or portions thereof relating directly to the physical security of the facility or revealing security systems;
- Threat assessments conducted by any agency or any private entity;
- Threat response plans;
- Emergency evacuation plans;
- Sheltering arrangements; or
- Manuals for security personnel, emergency equipment, or security training.

A security system plan or any portion thereof that is held by an agency<sup>11</sup> is confidential and exempt<sup>12</sup> from public record requirements if the plan is for any property owned by or leased to the state or any of its political subdivisions or any privately owned or leased property.<sup>13</sup> An agency is authorized to disclose the confidential and exempt information:

- To the property owner or leaseholder;
- In furtherance of the official duties and responsibilities of the agency holding the information;
- To another local, state, or federal agency in furtherance of that agency's official duties and responsibilities; or
- Upon a showing of good cause before a court of competent jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup>

Any portion of a meeting that would reveal a security system plan or portion thereof is exempt from public meeting requirements.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 119.15(3), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines "agency" 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 chapter 119, F.S., 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.

<sup>12</sup> There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public record requirements and those the Legislature deems 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, 53 (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 1994); *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 statute. See Attorney General Opinion 85-62 (August 1, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Section 119.071(3)(a)2., F.S.

<sup>14</sup> Section 119.071(3)(a)3., F.S.

<sup>15</sup> Section 286.0113(1), F.S.

### *Other Information Related to Security Systems*

Section 281.301, F.S., provides that information relating to security systems that is in the possession of an agency and all meetings relating directly to or that would reveal such security systems or information are confidential and exempt from public record and public meeting requirements if the security systems are for:

- Any property owned by or leased to the state or any of its political subdivisions; or
- Any privately owned or leased property.

The law specifies that the protected information includes all records, information, photographs, audio and visual presentations, schematic diagrams, surveys, recommendations, or consultations or portions thereof relating directly to or revealing such systems or information.

An agency is authorized to disclose the confidential and exempt information:

- To the property owner or leaseholder;
- In furtherance of the official duties and responsibilities of the agency holding the information;
- To another local, state, or federal agency in furtherance of that agency's official duties and responsibilities; or
- Upon a showing of good cause before a court of competent jurisdiction.

### **Effect of the Bill**

The bill creates public record and public meeting exemptions for firesafety system plans and information relating to firesafety systems that are identical to the exemptions currently in law for security system plans and information relating to security systems.

The bill specifies that the public record exemptions must be given retroactive application because they are remedial in nature. Thus, records of firesafety system plans and records relating to firesafety systems in existence prior to the effective date of the bill will be protected by the exemptions.

The bill provides a public necessity statement as required by the State Constitution, specifying that as firesafety systems become more integrated with security systems, disclosure of sensitive information relating to the firesafety systems could result in identification of vulnerabilities in the systems and allow a security breach that could damage the systems and disrupt their safe and reliable operation.

The bill provides for repeal of the exemptions on October 2, 2023, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

### **B. SECTION DIRECTORY:**

Section 1. amends s. 119.071, F.S., relating to a general exemption from inspection or copying of public records.

Section 2. amends s. 281.301, F.S., relating to security systems; records and meetings exempt from public access or disclosure.

Section 3. amends s. 286.0113, F.S., relating to general exemptions from public meetings.

Section 4. provides a public necessity statement.

Section 5. provides an effective date of upon becoming a law.

## II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

### A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

#### 1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have an impact on state government revenues.

#### 2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

### B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

#### 1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have an impact on local government revenues.

#### 2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

### C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

### D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill could have a minimal fiscal impact on agencies because agency staff responsible for complying with public record requests and public meeting requirements may require training related to creation of the public record and public meeting exemptions. In addition, agencies could incur costs associated with redacting the confidential and exempt information prior to releasing a record. The costs, however, would be absorbed, as they are part of the day-to-day responsibilities of agencies.

## III. COMMENTS

### A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

#### 1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenue in the aggregate, nor reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

#### 2. Other:

##### Vote Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

##### Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a public necessity statement for a newly created or expanded public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it includes a public necessity statement.

### Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a newly created public record or public meeting exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The bill creates public record and public meeting exemptions for firesafety system plans and information relating to firesafety systems. As such, the exemption does not appear to be in conflict with the constitutional requirement that it be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.

#### B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not appear to create a need for rulemaking or rulemaking authority.

#### C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

### **IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES**

On January 24, 2018, the Government Accountability Committee adopted an amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Corrected drafting errors that referred to “confidential and exempt” meetings;
- Corrected a drafting error that provided for retroactive application of the public meeting exemption; and
- Revised the public necessity statement to specify that firesafety system records and information are “confidential and exempt” rather than “exempt.”

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as approved by the Government Accountability Committee.