

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 Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: SB 7022

INTRODUCER: Infrastructure and Security Committee

SUBJECT: OGSR/E-mail Addresses/Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

DATE: January 17, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>Miller</u>		IS Submitted as Committee Bill
1.	<u>Ponder</u>	<u>McVaney</u>	<u>GO</u>	Favorable
2.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>RC</u>	<u> </u>

I. Summary:

SB 7022 amends s. 119.0712, F.S., to save from repeal the current exemption from public records disclosure for e-mail addresses provided to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) for the purpose of providing notifications and renewal notices. The bill removes the scheduled repeal date of the exemption, October 2, 2020, thus continuing the exemption.

The bill is not expected to impact state and local revenues and expenditures.

The bill takes effect on October 1, 2020.

II. Present Situation:

Access to Public Records - Generally

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.¹ The right to inspect or copy applies to the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, including all three branches of state government, local governmental entities, and any person acting on behalf of the government.²

Additional requirements and exemptions related to public records are found in various statutes and rules, depending on the branch of government involved. For instance, section 11.0431, Florida Statutes (F.S.), provides public access requirements for legislative records. Relevant exemptions are codified in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S., and the statutory provisions are adopted in the

¹ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(a).

² *Id.*

rules of each house of the legislature.³ Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420 governs public access to judicial branch records.⁴ Lastly, chapter 119, F.S., provides requirements for public records held by executive agencies.

Executive Agency Records – The Public Records Act

Chapter 119, F.S., known as the Public Records Act, provides that all state, county and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person, and that providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.⁵

A public record includes virtually any document or recording, regardless of its physical form or how it may be transmitted.⁶ The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted the statutory definition of “public record” to include “material prepared in connection with official agency business which is intended to perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge of some type.”⁷

The Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access to public records must be provided. The Public Records Act guarantees every person’s right to inspect and copy any public record at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public record.⁸ A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.⁹

The Legislature may exempt public records from public access requirements by passing a general law by a two-thirds vote of both the House and the Senate.¹⁰ The exemption must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.¹¹

³ See Rule 1.48, *Rules and Manual of the Florida Senate*, (2018-2020) and Rule 14.1, *Rules of the Florida House of Representatives*, Edition 2, (2018-2020)

⁴ *State v. Wooten*, 260 So. 3d 1060 (Fla. 4th DCA 2018).

⁵ Section 119.01(1), F.S. Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” 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.”

⁶ Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public record” 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.”

⁷ *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc., Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

⁸ Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

⁹ Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are the penalties for violating those laws.

¹⁰ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

¹¹ *Id.* See, e.g., *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. News-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999) (holding that a public meetings exemption was unconstitutional because the statement of public necessity did not define important terms and did not justify the breadth of the exemption); *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004) (holding that a statutory provision written to bring another party within an existing public records exemption is unconstitutional without a public necessity statement).

General exemptions from the public records requirements are contained in the Public Records Act.¹² Specific exemptions often are placed in the substantive statutes relating to a particular agency or program.¹³

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is “exempt” or “confidential and exempt.” Custodians of records designated as “exempt” are not prohibited from disclosing the record; rather, the exemption means that the custodian cannot be compelled to disclose the record.¹⁴ Custodians of records designated as “confidential and exempt” may not disclose the record except under circumstances specifically defined by the Legislature.¹⁵

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act¹⁶ (the Act) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended¹⁷ public records or open meetings exemptions, with specified exceptions.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if it meets one of the following purposes *and* the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

- It allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;²¹
- It protects sensitive, personal information, the release of which would be defamatory, cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of the individual, or would jeopardize the individual’s safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;²² or
- It protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, such as trade or business secrets.²³

¹² See, e.g., s. 119.071(1)(a), F.S. (exempting from public disclosure examination questions and answer sheets of examinations administered by a governmental agency for the purpose of licensure).

¹³ See, e.g., s. 213.053(2)(a), F.S. (exempting from public disclosure information contained in tax returns received by the Department of Revenue).

¹⁴ See *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 683, 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

¹⁵ *WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So. 2d 48 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

¹⁶ Section 119.15, F.S.

¹⁷ An exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 119.15(2)(a) and (b), F.S., provide that exemptions that are required by federal law or are applicable solely to the Legislature or the State Court System are not subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act.

¹⁹ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

²⁰ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

²¹ Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

²² Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

²³ Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

The Act also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.²⁴ In examining an exemption, the Act directs the Legislature to carefully question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If the exemption is continued and expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.²⁵ If the exemption is continued without substantive changes or if the exemption is continued and narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to sunset, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless provided for by law.²⁶

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and E-Mail Addresses

The DHSMV is the records custodian of motor vehicle records,²⁷ which contain personal information about drivers and motor vehicle owners. Florida's motor vehicle records contain personal information such as a driver's social security number, driver license number, name, address, telephone number, and medical or disability information. The DHSMV is authorized to collect e-mail addresses and use e-mail, in lieu of the United States Postal Service, as a method of providing title certificate notifications,²⁸ for the purpose of providing motor vehicle registration renewal notices,²⁹ and for the purpose of providing driver license renewal notices.³⁰

Open Government Sunset Review of the Public Record Exemption for E-Mail Addresses and Recommendation

In 2015, the Legislature created a public record exemption for e-mail addresses held by the DHSMV if the e-mail addresses are collected by the DHSMV specifically for:

- • Sending a notification regarding motor vehicle titles, pursuant to s. 319.40(3), F.S.;
- • Providing a renewal notice for a motor vehicle license or registration, pursuant to 320.95(2), F.S.; and

²⁴ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

- What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
- Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
- What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
- Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means? If so, how?
- Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?
- Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

²⁵ See generally s. 119.15, F.S.

²⁶ Section 119.15(7), F.S.

²⁷ Section 119.0712(2)(a), defines the term "motor vehicle record" to mean "any record that pertains to a motor vehicle operator's permit, motor vehicle title, motor vehicle registration, or identification card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles."

²⁸ Section 319.40(3), F.S.

²⁹ Section 320.95(2), F.S.

³⁰ Section 322.08(10), F.S.

- Providing a renewal notice for a driver license or identification card, pursuant to 322.08(10), F.S.³¹ (Notification and Renewal Transactions).³²

The 2015 public necessity statement³³ for the exemption provides that:

The Legislature finds that . . . e-mail addresses are unique to each individual and, when combined with other personal identifying information, can be used for identity theft, consumer scams, unwanted solicitations, or other invasive contacts. The public availability of personal e-mail addresses puts department customers at increased risk of these problems. Such risk may be significantly limited by permitting the department to keep customer e-mail addresses exempt. The Legislature finds that the risks to consumers outweigh the state’s public policy favoring open government.³⁴

Section 119.0712, F.S., is subject to the OGSR and stands repealed on October 2, 2020, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

The DHSMV has collected approximately 12.9 million e-mail addresses for both active and inactive drivers.³⁵ The DHSMV recommends that the public records exemption be reenacted.

Based upon a review of this public records exemption under the OGSR and discussions with the DHSMV, the professional staff of the Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee recommends that the Legislature retain the public records exemption established in s. 119.0712, F.S.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill saves from repeal the public records exemption in s. 119.0712(2)(c), F.S., for e-mail addresses collected by the DHSMV for the purpose of Notification and Renewal Transactions. These records will continue to be exempt from public disclosure beyond October 2, 2020.

The bill also corrects a statutory cross-reference from s. 322.08(9), F.S., to s. 322.08(10), F.S., which relates to DHSMV’s authority to collect and use e-mail addresses for driver licensing purposes. See VII. Related Issues below for details.

³¹ As originally enacted in ch. 2015-32 L.O.F., s. 322.08(8), F.S., made an erroneous reference to subsection (8) because, that same session, in ch. 2015-163, L.O.F., the legislature renumbered subsections (4) through (8) of s. 322.08, F.S. The effect of this renumbering moved the provision governing the collection of e-mail addresses for renewal notices from subsection (8) to subsection (9) of s. 322.80, F.S. In 2016, ch. 2016-10, L.O.F., amended s. 119.0712, F.S., to “correct” the reference from subsection (8) to subsection (9) of s. 322.08, F.S. However, that same session, in ch. 2016-242, L.O.F., the legislature moved subsection (9) of s. 322.08, F.S., to subsection (10), and added a new subsection (9). Thus, s. 119.0712(2)(c), F.S., continued to contain an erroneous reference for the collection of e-mail address for renewal notices. This bill corrects this error, making proper reference to subsection (10) instead of subsection (9).

³² Section 119.0712(2)(c), F.S.

³³ Article I, s. 24(c), FLA. CONST., requires each public record exemption “state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption.”

³⁴ Chapter 2015-32, L.O.F.

³⁵ Email from the DHSMV staff to Senate Committee on Infrastructure and Security staff on September 4, 2019 (on file with Senate Committee on Infrastructure and Security).

The bill requires a majority vote for passage.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2020.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. The bill does not require counties or municipalities to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that 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.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Vote Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records requirements. The bill continues a current public records exemption beyond its current date of repeal. The bill does not create or expand an exemption. Thus, the bill does not require an extraordinary vote for enactment.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records requirements to state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption. The bill continues a current public records exemption without an expansion. Thus, a statement of public necessity is not required.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires an exemption to the public records requirements to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The purpose of the law is to protect the personal identifying information contained in a record held by a tax collector for certain purposes. The exemption does not appear to be broader than necessary to accomplish the purpose of the law.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

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

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The private sector will continue to be subject to the cost associated with an agency making redactions in response to a public records request.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Governmental agencies will continue to incur costs related to the redaction of records in responding to public records requests.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

The bill substantially amends section 119.0712 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.