

By Senator Cruz

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Legislature; providing a short
3 title; amending s. 11.143, F.S.; deleting provisions
4 regarding the administration of oaths and affirmations
5 to witnesses appearing before legislative committees,
6 and associated penalties, to conform to changes made
7 by the act; creating s. 11.1435, F.S.; requiring that
8 persons addressing a legislative committee take an
9 oath or affirmation of truthfulness; providing
10 exceptions; requiring that a member of the legislative
11 committee administer the oath or affirmation;
12 providing criminal penalties for certain false
13 statements before a legislative committee; authorizing
14 the use of a signed appearance form in lieu of an oral
15 oath or affirmation; prescribing conditions related to
16 the use of such form; providing penalties for making a
17 false statement after signing such form; providing an
18 effective date.

19
20 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

21
22 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Truth in
23 Government Act."

24 Section 2. Section 11.143, Florida Statutes, is amended to
25 read:

26 11.143 Standing or select committees; powers.—

27 (1) Each standing or select committee, or a subcommittee
28 thereof, may:

29 (a) is authorized to Invite public officials and employees

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30 and private individuals to appear before the committee for the
31 purpose of submitting information to it.

32 (b) ~~Each such committee is authorized to~~ Maintain a
33 continuous review of the work of the state agencies concerned
34 with its subject area and the performance of the functions of
35 government within each such subject area and for this purpose to
36 request reports from time to time, in such form as the committee
37 designates, concerning the operation of any state agency and
38 presenting any proposal or recommendation such agency may have
39 with regard to existing laws or proposed legislation in its
40 subject area.

41 (2) In order to carry out its duties, each such committee
42 has ~~is empowered with~~ the right and authority to inspect and
43 investigate the books, records, papers, documents, data,
44 operation, and physical plant of any public agency in this
45 state, including any confidential information.

46 (3) (a) In order to carry out its duties, each such
47 committee, whenever required, may issue subpoena and other
48 necessary process to compel the attendance of witnesses before
49 such committee, and the chair thereof shall issue the process on
50 behalf of the committee, in accordance with the rules of the
51 respective house. ~~The chair or any other member of such~~
52 ~~committee may administer all oaths and affirmations in the~~
53 ~~manner prescribed by law to witnesses who appear before the~~
54 ~~committee for the purpose of testifying in any matter concerning~~
55 ~~which the committee desires evidence.~~

56 (b) Each such committee, whenever required, may also compel
57 by subpoena duces tecum the production of any books, letters, or
58 other documentary evidence, including any confidential

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59 information, it desires to examine in reference to any matter
60 before it.

61 (c) Either house during the session may punish by fine or
62 imprisonment any person not a member who has been guilty of
63 disorderly or contemptuous conduct in its presence or of a
64 refusal to obey its lawful summons, but such imprisonment must
65 not extend beyond the final adjournment of the session.

66 (d) The sheriffs in the several counties or a duly
67 constituted agent of a Florida legislative committee 18 years of
68 age or older shall make such service and execute all process or
69 orders when required by such committees. Sheriffs shall be paid
70 as provided for in s. 30.231.

71 ~~(4) (a) Whoever willfully affirms or swears falsely in~~
72 ~~regard to any material matter or thing before any such committee~~
73 ~~is guilty of false swearing, which constitutes a felony of the~~
74 ~~second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083,~~
75 ~~or s. 775.084.~~

76 ~~(b)~~ If a witness fails to respond to the lawful subpoena of
77 any such committee at a time when the Legislature is not in
78 session or, having responded, fails to answer all lawful
79 inquiries or to turn over evidence that has been subpoenaed,
80 such committee may file a complaint before any circuit court of
81 the state setting up such failure on the part of the witness. On
82 the filing of such complaint, the court shall take jurisdiction
83 of the witness and the subject matter of the complaint and shall
84 direct the witness to respond to all lawful questions and to
85 produce all documentary evidence in the possession of the
86 witness which is lawfully demanded. The failure of a witness to
87 comply with such order of the court constitutes a direct and

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88 criminal contempt of court, and the court shall punish the
89 witness accordingly.

90 (5) All witnesses summoned before any such committee shall
91 receive reimbursement for travel expenses and per diem at the
92 rates provided in s. 112.061. However, the fact that such
93 reimbursement is not tendered at the time the subpoena is served
94 does not excuse the witness from appearing as directed therein.

95 Section 3. Section 11.1435, Florida Statutes, is created to
96 read:

97 11.1435 Oath or affirmation; penalty.-

98 (1) (a) Any person who addresses a standing or select
99 committee, or a subcommittee thereof, shall first declare that
100 he or she will speak truthfully by taking an oath or affirmation
101 in substantially the following form: "Do you swear or affirm
102 that the information you are about to share will be the truth,
103 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" The person's answer
104 must be noted in the record.

105 (b) Paragraph (a) does not apply to:

106 1. A member of the Legislature in his or her official
107 capacity or an employee of the Legislature in his or her
108 capacity as an employee; however, the member or employee is
109 subject to discipline by the presiding officer of the applicable
110 house of the Legislature for making a false statement that he or
111 she does not believe to be true.

112 2. A child, if the chair of the committee determines that
113 the child understands the duty to tell the truth or the duty not
114 to lie.

115
116 Notwithstanding the exceptions prescribed in this paragraph, a

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117 standing or select committee, or any subcommittee thereof, if
118 deemed necessary by the chair, may require any person who
119 addresses the committee to take an oath or affirmation of
120 truthfulness as provided in this section, subject to the
121 penalties provided in subsection (2).

122 (c) The chair or any other member of the committee shall
123 administer the oath or affirmation required under this section.

124 (2) (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), a person who
125 makes a false statement that he or she does not believe to be
126 true in regard to any material matter, while under the oath or
127 affirmation required by this section, commits a felony of the
128 third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083,
129 or s. 775.084.

130 (b) A person compelled by subpoena as a witness before a
131 committee under s. 11.143(3) who makes a false statement that he
132 or she does not believe to be true in regard to any material
133 matter, while under the oath or affirmation required by this
134 section, commits a felony of the second degree, punishable as
135 provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

136 (3) In lieu of the oral oath or affirmation required by
137 this section, the Senate or the House of Representatives, by the
138 rules of each respective house, may require any person, as
139 prescribed in subsection (1), who addresses a committee to
140 complete and sign an appearance form. The form must be signed
141 before the person addresses the committee. Signing the form
142 constitutes a written affirmation to speak the truth, the whole
143 truth, and nothing but the truth, and subjects the person to the
144 penalties as provided in this section. The form must include a
145 statement notifying the person that signing the form constitutes

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146 an affirmation and notifying the person of the penalty
147 provisions.

148 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.