

**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 Regulated Industries

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BILL: SB 692

INTRODUCER: Senator Hutson

SUBJECT: Public Records/Florida Gaming Control Commission

DATE: January 12, 2024

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Kraemer</u>	<u>Imhof</u>	<u>RI</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>GO</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 692 exempts from public records copying and inspection requirements certain identifying information of current or former commissioners of the Florida Gaming Control Commission (commission) and their family members. The exemption restricts access to information in public records which may identify or locate current or former commissioners, and their spouses and children.

The bill exempts from public disclosure the following information:

- The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former commissioners;
- The names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, photographs, and places of employment of the spouses and children of current or former commissioners; and
- The names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current or former commissioners.

This exemption applies to information held by an agency before, on, or after July 1, 2024 and is repealed on October 2, 2029, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

The bill provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

Because the bill creates a new public records exemption, it requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature for final passage.

According to the FGCC, the bill has no fiscal impact to state government.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Florida Gaming Control Commission, *2024 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 692* at 5 (Dec. 21, 2023) (on file with the Senate Committee on Regulated Industries).

The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

## 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

Additional requirements and exemptions related to public records are found in various statutes and rules, depending on the branch of government involved. For instance, s. 11.0431, F.S., provides public access requirements for legislative records. Relevant exemptions are codified in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S., and adopted in the rules of each house of the legislature.<sup>4</sup> Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.420 governs public access to judicial branch records.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, ch. 119, F.S., known as the Public Records Act, provides requirements for public records held by executive branch and local government agencies.

### Executive Agency Records – The Public Records Act

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.<sup>6</sup>

Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public records” to include:

[a]ll 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 connections with the transaction of official business by any agency.

The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted this definition to encompass all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business that are used to “perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge of some type.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(a).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> See Rule 1.48, *Rules and Manual of the Florida Senate*, (2022-2024) and Rule 14.1, *Rules of the Florida House of Representatives*, Edition 1, (2022-2024).

<sup>5</sup> *State v. Wooten*, 260 So. 3d 1060 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 2018).

<sup>6</sup> 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.”

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

The Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access to governmental 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.<sup>8</sup> A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

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

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is "exempt" or "confidential and exempt." There is a difference between records the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act and those which the Legislature has determined to be exempt from the Public Records Act *and confidential*.<sup>14</sup> Records designated as "confidential and exempt" are not subject to inspection by the public and may only be released under the circumstances defined by statute.<sup>15</sup> Records designated as "exempt" may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

### **Open Government Sunset Review Act**

The provisions of s. 119.15, F.S., known as the Open Government Sunset Review Act<sup>17</sup> (the act), prescribe a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended<sup>18</sup> public records or open meetings exemptions, with specified exceptions.<sup>19</sup> The act requires the repeal of such exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment; in

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<sup>8</sup> Section 119.07(1)(a), F.S.

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

<sup>10</sup> FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

<sup>11</sup> *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).

<sup>12</sup> *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).

<sup>13</sup> *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).

<sup>14</sup> *WFTV, Inc. v. The Sch. Bd. of Seminole County*, 874 So. 2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 2004).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 683 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Section 119.15, F.S.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> Section 119.15(2)(a) and (b), F.S., provides that exemptions required by federal law or applicable solely to the Legislature or the State Court System are not subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act.

order to save an exemption from repeal, the Legislature must reenact the exemption or repeal the sunset date.<sup>20</sup> In practice, many exemptions are continued by repealing the sunset date, rather than reenacting the exemption.

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.<sup>21</sup> An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption and it meets one of the following purposes:

It allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;<sup>22</sup>

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;<sup>23</sup> or

It protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, such as trade or business secrets.<sup>24</sup>

### **Public Records Exemptions for Enumerated Personnel**

Provisions in s. 119.071(4)(d), F.S., exempt from public disclosure the personal identification and location information of enumerated agency personnel, their spouses, and their children. The employing agency as well as the employee may assert the right to the exemption by submitting a written request to each agency that holds the employee's information.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, all of these exemptions have retroactive application.<sup>26</sup> In order to have the exemption applied to a court record or an official record held by a clerk of court, the party must make a request specifying the document name, type, identification number, and page number.<sup>27</sup> Any enumerated personnel who has his or her public records held exempt may file a written and notarized request to any record custodian to have the records released to an identified party.<sup>28</sup>

### **Enforcement of Gaming Laws and Florida Gaming Control Commission**

In 2021, the Legislature updated Florida law for authorized gaming in the state, and for enforcement of the gambling laws and other laws relating to authorized gaming.<sup>29</sup> The Office of

<sup>20</sup> Section 119.15(3), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 119.071(4)(d)3., F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 119.071(4)(d)6., F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 119.0714(2)(f) and (3)(f), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Section 119.071(4)(d)5., F.S.

<sup>29</sup> See ch. 2021-268, Laws of Fla., (Implementation of 2021 Gaming Compact between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the State of Florida); ch. 2021-269, Laws of Fla., (Gaming Enforcement), ch. 2021-270, Laws of Fla., (Public Records and Public Meetings), and 2021-271, Laws of Fla., (Gaming), Laws of Fla., as amended by ch. 2022-179, Laws of Fla., (Florida Gaming Control Commission). Conforming amendments are made to the section in ch. 2022-7, Laws of Fla., (Reviser's Bill) and ch. 2023-8, Laws of Fla., (Reviser's Bill).

Statewide Prosecution in the Department of Legal Affairs is authorized to investigate and prosecute, in addition to gambling offenses, any violation of ch. 24, F.S., (State Lotteries), part II of ch. 285, F.S., (Gaming Compact), ch. 546, F.S., (Amusement Facilities), ch. 550, F.S., (Pari-mutuel Wagering), ch. 551, F.S., (Slot Machines), or ch. 849, F.S., (Gambling), which are referred to the Office of Statewide Prosecution by the commission.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the enhanced authority of the Office of Statewide Prosecution, the commission was created<sup>31</sup> within the Department of Legal Affairs, to do all of the following:<sup>32</sup>

- Exercise all of the regulatory and executive powers of the state with respect to gambling, including pari-mutuel wagering, cardrooms, slot machine facilities, oversight of gaming compacts executed by the state pursuant to the Federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, and any other forms of gambling authorized by the State Constitution or law, excluding state lottery games as authorized by the State Constitution.
- Establish procedures consistent with ch. 120, F.S., the Administrative Procedure Act, to ensure adequate due process in the exercise of the commission's regulatory and executive functions.
- Ensure that the laws of this state are not interpreted in any manner that expands the activities authorized in ch. 24, F.S. (State Lotteries), part II of ch. 285, F.S. (Gaming Compact), ch. 546, F.S. (Amusement Facilities), ch. 550, F.S. (Pari-mutuel Wagering), ch. 551, F.S., (Slot Machines), or ch. 849, F.S. (Gambling).
- Review the rules and regulations promulgated by the Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission for the operation of sports betting and propose to the Seminole Tribe Gaming Commission any additional consumer protection measures it deems appropriate. The proposed consumer protection measures may include, but are not limited to, the types of advertising and marketing conducted for sports betting, the types of procedures implemented to prohibit underage persons from engaging in sports betting, and the types of information, materials, and procedures needed to assist patrons with compulsive or addictive gambling problems.
- Evaluate, as the state compliance agency or as the commission, information that is reported by sports governing bodies or other parties to the commission relating to:
  - Any abnormal betting activity or patterns that may indicate a concern about the integrity of a sports event or events;
  - Any other conduct with the potential to corrupt a betting outcome of a sports event for purposes of financial gain, including, but not limited to, match fixing; suspicious or illegal wagering activities, including the use of funds derived from illegal activity, wagers to conceal or launder funds derived from illegal activity, use of agents to place wagers, or use of false identification; and
  - The use of data deemed unacceptable by the commission or the Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission.
- The commission must provide reasonable notice to state and local law enforcement, the Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission, and any appropriate sports governing body of non-proprietary information that may warrant further investigation of nonproprietary information by such entities to ensure integrity of wagering activities in the state.

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<sup>30</sup> Section 16.56(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>31</sup> Section 16.71, F.S.

<sup>32</sup> Section 16.712, F.S. The commission also administers the Pari-mutuel Wagering Trust Fund. *See s. 16.71(6)*, F.S.

- Review any matter within the scope of the jurisdiction of the Division of Pari-mutuel Wagering.
- Review the regulation of licensees, permitholders, or persons regulated by the Division of Pari-mutuel Wagering and the procedures used by the division to implement and enforce the law.
- Review the procedures of the Division of Pari-mutuel Wagering which are used to qualify applicants applying for a license, permit, or registration.
- Receive and review violations reported by a state or local law enforcement agency, the Department of Law Enforcement, the Department of Legal Affairs, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, the Department of the Lottery, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, or any person licensed under ch. 24, F.S. (State Lotteries), part II of ch. 285, F.S. (Gaming Compact), ch. 546, F.S. (Amusement Facilities), ch. 550, F.S. (Pari-mutuel Wagering), ch. 551, F.S., (Slot Machines), or ch. 849, F.S. (Gambling), and determine whether such violation is appropriate for referral to the Office of Statewide Prosecution.
- Refer criminal violations of ch. 24, F.S. (State Lotteries), part II of ch. 285, F.S. (Gaming Compact), ch. 546, F.S. (Amusement Facilities), ch. 550, F.S. (Pari-mutuel Wagering), ch. 551, F.S., (Slot Machines), or ch. 849, F.S. (Gambling) to the appropriate state attorney or to the Office of Statewide Prosecution, as applicable.
- Exercise all other powers and perform any other duties prescribed by the Legislature, and adopt rules to implement the above.

### *Commissioners*

As set forth in s. 16.71, F.S., of the five commissioners appointed as members of the commission, at least one member must have at least 10 years of experience in law enforcement and criminal investigations, at least one member must be a certified public accountant licensed in this state with at least 10 years of experience in accounting and auditing, and at least one member must be an attorney admitted and authorized to practice law in this state for the preceding 10 years. All members serve four-year terms, but may not serve more than 12 years. As of the date of this analysis, there is one vacancy on the commission.

Current and former commissioners and their families may be harassed based on official actions taken or decisions made on behalf of the commission relating to licensees, applicants, and those engaged in illegal conduct, such as gambling, or conducting operations that otherwise violate Florida law.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 119.071(4)(d)2., F.S., to exempt certain information relating to current or former commissioners of the commission and their spouses and children from the public disclosure requirements. The following information will be exempt:

- The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former commissioners;
- The names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, photographs, and places of employment of the spouses and children of current or former commissioners; and

- The names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current or former commissioners.

This exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act, s. 119.15, F.S., and stands repealed on October 2, 2029, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

**Section 2** provides the public necessity statement required by the State Constitution. The public necessity statement provides that the release of certain personal identifying and location information might place current or former commissioners and their family members in danger of physical and emotional harm from disgruntled individuals whose businesses or professional practices have come under the scrutiny of the commission. In addition, such personnel may be subject to threats or acts of revenge because of the duties they perform, and the harm that may result from the release of such personal identifying and location information outweighs the public benefit that may be derived from the disclosure of the information.

**Section 3** provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2024.

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

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

Not applicable. The mandate restrictions do not apply because the bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds, reduce counties' or municipalities' ability to raise revenue, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

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

###### **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 bill creating or expanding an exemption to the public records requirements. This bill enacts a new exemption for records pertaining to judicial assistants; therefore, the bill requires a two-thirds vote of each chamber 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. Section 2 of the bill contains a statement of public necessity for the exemption.

###### **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 current and former commissioners and their family members, and the bill exempts only records pertaining to those persons from the public records requirements. 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:

Any individual or business that currently obtains location information that is covered by the definition of “home addresses” in the bill will not be able to obtain that information from the records custodian without a signed waiver if the employee or the employee’s agency requests that the home address information be exempted.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the FGCC, the bill has no fiscal impact to state government.<sup>33</sup> This bill may have a minimal negative fiscal impact on the commission or agencies holding records that contain certain personal identifying and location information relating to commissioners and their spouses and children, because staff responsible for complying with public record requests may require training related to the new public record exemption. Additionally, agencies may incur costs associated with redacting the exempt information prior to releasing a record. However, the costs should be absorbed as part of the day-to-day commission or agency responsibilities.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The bill omits the word “Control” in a reference to the Florida Gaming Control Commission. Staff has prepared the required technical amendment to correct the reference. *See* line 401 of the bill.

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<sup>33</sup> *See* Florida Gaming Control Commission, *2024 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 692* at 5 (Dec. 21, 2023) (on file with the Senate Committee on Regulated Industries).



**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 119.071 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.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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