

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [HB 4009](#)

**TITLE:** St. Augustine-St. Johns County Airport Authority,  
St. Johns County

**SPONSOR(S):** Kendall

**COMPANION BILL:** None

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:** 111 Y's

0 N's

**GOVERNOR'S ACTION:**

Pending

### SUMMARY

#### Effect of the Bill:

The bill authorizes the St. Johns County Airport Authority to conduct operations under the name St. Augustine Airport instead of the Northeast Florida Regional Airport.

#### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None.

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill amends the charter of the [St. Johns County Airport Authority](#), an independent [special district](#), to allow the airport to conduct airport operations under the name St. Augustine Airport. Currently, the St. Johns County Airport Authority conducts airport operations under the name Northeast Florida Regional Airport. (Section [1](#))

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of this bill is upon becoming a law. (Section [2](#))

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

#### Special Districts

A "special district" is a unit of local government created for a particular purpose, with jurisdiction to operate within a limited geographic boundary.<sup>1</sup> Special districts are created by general law, special act, local ordinance, or rule of the Governor and Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> A special district has only those powers expressly provided by, or reasonably implied from, the authority provided in the district's charter. Special districts provide specific municipal services in addition to, or in place of, those provided by a municipality or county.<sup>3</sup> Special districts are funded through the imposition of ad valorem taxes, fees, or charges on the users of those services as authorized by law.<sup>4</sup>

Special districts may be classified as dependent or independent based on their relationship with local general-purpose governments. A special district is classified as "dependent" if the governing body of a single county or municipality:

- Serves as governing body of the district;

<sup>1</sup> See *Halifax Hospital Medical Center v. State of Fla., et al.*, 278 So. 3d 545, 547 (Fla. 2019).

<sup>2</sup> See ss. [189.02\(1\)](#), [189.031\(3\)](#), and [190.005\(1\)](#), F.S. See generally [s. 189.012\(6\)](#), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee, *Local Government Formation Manual*, p. 56 (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> The method of financing a district must be stated in its charter. Ss. [189.02\(4\)\(g\)](#) and [189.031\(3\)](#), F.S. Independent special districts may be authorized to impose ad valorem taxes as well as non-ad valorem special assessments in the special acts comprising their charters. See, e.g., [ch. 2023-335, s. 6 of s. 1, Laws of Fla.](#) (East River Ranch Stewardship District). See also, e.g., ss. [190.021](#) (community development districts), [191.009](#) (independent fire control districts), [197.3631](#) (non-ad valorem assessments), [298.305](#) (water control districts), and [388.221](#), F.S. (mosquito control). See also [ch. 2004-397, s. 27 of s. 3, Laws of Fla.](#) (South Broward Hospital District).

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- Appoints the governing body of the district;
- May remove members of the district’s governing body at-will during their unexpired terms; or
- Approves or can veto the budget of the district.<sup>5</sup>

A district is classified as “independent” if it does not meet any of the above criteria or is located in more than one county, unless the district lies entirely within the boundaries of a single municipality.<sup>6</sup>

Special districts are governed generally by the Uniform Special District Accountability Act (USDAA).<sup>7</sup> The USDAA centralizes provisions governing special districts and applies to the formation,<sup>8</sup> governance,<sup>9</sup> administration,<sup>10</sup> supervision,<sup>11</sup> merger,<sup>12</sup> and dissolution<sup>13</sup> of special districts, unless otherwise expressly provided in law.<sup>14</sup> The USDAA requires notice and publication of tentative budgets and final budgets.<sup>15</sup> Certain budget amendments are allowed up to 60 days following the end of the fiscal year.<sup>16</sup>

Special districts do not possess “home rule” powers and may impose only those taxes, assessments, or fees authorized by special or general law. The special act creating an independent special district may provide for funding from a variety of sources while prohibiting others. For example, ad valorem tax authority is not mandatory for a special district.<sup>17</sup>

### **St. Johns County Airport Authority**

The St. Johns County Airport Authority (Authority) is an independent special district created in 1963;<sup>18</sup> the Authority’s charter was recodified in 2002.<sup>19</sup> The Authority operates the Northeast Florida Regional Airport, a general aviation airport located near downtown St. Augustine.<sup>20</sup> The airport engaged in approximately 120,000 operations in 2023.<sup>21</sup> The airport was originally named the St. Augustine Airport, but was renamed in 2021.<sup>22</sup>

A five-member board governs the Authority.<sup>23</sup> Board members are elected by qualified electors of St. Johns County and serve a four-year term. Board members do not receive compensation for their services, but may be reimbursed for verified travel and other expenses using funds from the Authority.

<sup>5</sup> S. [189.012\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>6</sup> S. [189.012\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>7</sup> S. [189.01, F.S.](#), but see ch. 190, F.S. (community development districts), ch. 191, F.S. (independent special fire control districts), ch. 298, F.S. (water control districts), ch. 388, F.S. (mosquito control districts), and ch. 582, F.S. (soil and water conservation districts).

<sup>8</sup> See ss. [189.02](#) (creation of dependent special districts) and [189.031, F.S.](#) (creation of independent special districts).

<sup>9</sup> See s. [189.0311, F.S.](#) (charter requirements for independent special districts).

<sup>10</sup> See s. [189.019, F.S.](#) (requiring codification of charters incorporating all special acts for the district).

<sup>11</sup> See s. [189.0651, F.S.](#) (oversight for special districts created by special act of the Legislature).

<sup>12</sup> Ss. [189.071](#) and [189.074, F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ss. [189.071](#) and [189.072, F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., s. [190.004, F.S.](#) (ch. 190, F.S. as “sole authorization” for creation of community development districts).

<sup>15</sup> S. [189.016\(4\), F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> S. [189.016\(6\), F.S.](#)

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., ch. [2006-354, Laws of Fla.](#) (Argyle Fire District may impose special assessments, but has no ad valorem tax authority).

<sup>18</sup> Ch. 63-1853, Laws of Fla.

<sup>19</sup> [Ch. 2002-347, Laws of Fla.](#)

<sup>20</sup> Northeast Florida Regional Airport, [Welcome to Northeast Florida Regional Airport](#) (last visited Feb. 26, 2025). See also Federal Aviation Administration, National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems, [Appendix A: List of NPIAS Airports](#) (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>21</sup> Northeast Florida Regional Airport, [Budget Report FY 24/25](#), p. 7 (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> [Ch. 2021-246, Laws of Fla.](#) See Lucia Viti, St. Augustine Record, [Northeast Florida Regional Airport plans to change its name back to St. Augustine Airport](#), Jan. 27, 2025 (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>23</sup> Ch. [2002-347](#), s. 3(3)(3), Laws of Fla.

The Authority's charter authorizes the district to levy an ad valorem tax of up to 0.5 mills.<sup>24</sup> The Authority does not currently levy an ad valorem tax, instead the Authority is funded primarily from lease revenue for hangers and the sale of aviation fuel.<sup>25</sup>

### Local Bill Forms

The Florida Constitution prohibits the passage of any special act unless a notice of intention to seek enactment of the bill has been published as provided by general law or the act is conditioned to take effect only upon approval by referendum vote of the electors in the area affected.<sup>26</sup> A legal advertisement of the proposed bill must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation or published on a publicly accessible website<sup>27</sup> at least 30 days prior to the introduction of the local bill in the House or Senate.<sup>28</sup> This bill was noticed in the [St. Augustine Record on December 15, 2024](#).

The House local bill policy requires a completed and signed Local Bill Certification Form and Economic Impact Statement Form be filed with the Clerk of the House at the time the local bill is filed or as soon thereafter as possible.<sup>29</sup> Under the policy, a committee or subcommittee may not consider a local bill unless these forms have been filed. The following forms have been submitted for the bill:

- [Local Bill Certification Form](#)
- [Economic Impact Statement](#)

### RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #	HOUSE SPONSOR(S)	SENATE SPONSOR	OTHER INFORMATION
2021	<a href="#">CS/HB 787</a>	Stevenson		Passed and became law.

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<sup>24</sup> Ch. [2002-347](#), s. (3)(3)(11), Laws of Fla.

<sup>25</sup> Northeast Florida Regional Airport, [Budget Report FY 24/25](#), p. 11 (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> [Art. III, s. 10, Fla. Const.](#)

<sup>27</sup> S. [50.0311\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>28</sup> S. [11.02, F.S.](#) If there is no newspaper circulated throughout or published in the county and no publicly accessible website has been designated, notice must be posted for at least 30 days in at least three public places in the county, one of which must be at the courthouse.

<sup>29</sup> Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee, [Local Bill Policies and Procedures Manual](#), p. 11 (last visited Feb. 26, 2025).