

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 583](#)

TITLE: Registration of Agents and Organizations
Associated with Foreign Nations

SPONSOR(S): Owen

COMPANION BILL: [SB 766](#) (Burgess)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Government Operations](#)

16 Y, 0 N



[State Affairs](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires individuals and organizations acting as agents of foreign principals to register with the Division of Elections within 10 days: registrants must disclose their identity, affiliations, financial transactions, and political activities. Foreign-supported political organizations must also register by January 1, 2026, providing details on leadership, funding, and political expenditures from the past year. All registrations must be updated at least every 90 days. The bill authorizes the Florida Elections Commission to enforce compliance, imposing fines up to \$500 per violation, escalating to \$2,000 for repeated offenses. Violations involving hostile foreign principals (i.e. China, Russia, North Korea, Iran) carry fines up to \$10,000 and possible registration bans.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill will likely have an insignificant, negative fiscal impact on the state due to the costs associated with developing and maintaining the registration system, as well as administrative oversight, compliance monitoring, and enforcement related to the system. However, these additional costs can likely be absorbed within existing resources. Additionally, revenue from fines imposed for violations may offset some of these costs.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires individuals and organizations who become agents of a foreign principal¹ to register with the [Division of Elections](#) (Division) when engaged in political activity in the state. The term “political activity” includes attempts to influence the public, public officials, elections, or government policies. The registration must be signed under oath and filed with the Division within 10 days, and must be updated at least every 90 days. (Section [1](#))

The bill requires the Division to create a registration form for agents of foreign principals, requiring key details about the registrant and their affiliations. This includes their name, addresses, business activities, and the foreign principals they represent. If the foreign principal is an organization, the registrant must disclose its ownership, control, and any foreign government or political party involved. The form also requires financial disclosures, including payments received from foreign principals in the past 60 days and the nature of those transactions. Registrants must provide details of their political activities and any work performed on behalf of foreign principals. If acting for another agent of a foreign principal, the relationship must also be disclosed, along with related payments and activities. Finally, any payments made by the registrant in the past 60 days related to political activity must be reported. (Section [1](#))

¹ A “foreign principal” is defined as any of the following: a foreign government, a political party or its members in a foreign country, a non-U.S. citizen who is not a lawful permanent resident, a business or organization based in a foreign country, or a U.S.-based entity that is at least 20% owned by a foreign government, nonresident alien, or foreign-based organization.

STORAGE NAME: h0583a.GOS

DATE: 3/18/2025

The bill requires all foreign-supported political organizations² to register with the Division by January 1, 2026. The Division must create a registration form requiring specified information, including the organization's name, addresses, leadership, and any payments made for political activities in the past year. The organization must also disclose any funds received from or given to foreign principals or their agents in the previous year. Registered organizations must update this information at least every 90 days. (Section [1](#))

The [Florida Elections Commission](#) is authorized to enforce compliance, with penalties including fines of up to \$500 per violation, increasing to \$2,000 for willful or repeated violations. If the foreign principal is designated as a “hostile foreign principal”—which includes China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran—the fine may be as high as \$10,000, and violators may face a temporary or permanent ban from registration. (Section [1](#))

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [2](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill will likely have an insignificant, negative fiscal impact on the state due to the costs associated with developing and maintaining the registration system, as well as administrative oversight, compliance monitoring, and enforcement related to the system. However, these additional costs can likely be absorbed within existing resources. Additionally, revenue from fines imposed for violations may offset some of these costs.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[Division of Elections](#)

The Division of Elections within the Department of State is responsible for overseeing the electoral process within the state.³ This includes administering voter registration, facilitating candidate qualifying, managing campaign finance reporting, and ensuring the proper conduct of elections.⁴ Additionally, the Division provides guidance and support to the 67 county Supervisors of Elections—county-level officials responsible for administering the electoral process in their respective counties.⁵ The Division operates under the leadership of the Florida Secretary of State, who serves as the state's Chief Election Officer.⁶

[Florida Elections Commission](#)

The Florida Elections Commission (FEC)—which is administratively housed within the Department of Legal Affairs—is tasked with enforcing state election laws.⁷ The FEC consists of nine commissioners appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation, with political balance requirements to prevent partisan dominance.⁸ Commissioners serve four-year terms and are prohibited from lobbying the state or local governments during their

² A “foreign-supported political organization” is any political party, business, or organization that has received money or other thing of value from a foreign principal or its agent within the past five years and is involved in political activity.

³ S. [20.10\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#); see also s. [97.012, F.S.](#)

⁴ See ss. [97.012](#), [99.061](#), and [106.0705, F.S.](#)

⁵ Florida Division of Elections, [About Us](#) (last visited March 13, 2025); see also Vote Alachua Kim A. Barton Supervisor of Elections, [Responsibilities of the Supervisor of Elections](#) (last visited March 13, 2025).

⁶ S. [97.012, F.S.](#)

⁷ Ss. [106.24](#) and [106.25, F.S.](#)

⁸ See s. [106.24\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

tenure. The FEC investigates complaints related to campaign finance violations, unlawful political contributions, and other election-related misconduct. The FEC has authority to impose civil penalties in the form of fines.⁹

Campaign Financing

The Florida Election Code,¹⁰ in part, governs campaign financing¹¹ and related political activities in Florida, including provisions related to transparency, disclosure, and accountability in elections. It establishes rules for candidates, political committees, and electioneering communications organizations, including, but not limited to provisions regarding:

- Registration.
- Reporting.
- Contributions and expenditures.
- Restrictions on the use of campaign funds.¹²
- Audits of campaign reports and statements.¹³
- Termination of campaign accounts and disposition of surplus funds.¹⁴
- Disclaimers on political advertisements and communications.¹⁵

Lobbyist Registration and Compensation Reporting

Lobbyists must register to lobby the executive branch and the legislative branch in Florida. Executive branch lobbying is regulated by the Code of Ethics and administered by the Commission on Ethics (Commission).¹⁶ Legislative branch lobbying is regulated primarily by Joint Rule of the Florida Legislature and administered by the Office of Legislative Services.¹⁷ Both registration systems require lobbyists to annually register for each principal represented and to indicate the entities to be lobbied.¹⁸ In addition, lobbying firms must file quarterly compensation reports.¹⁹ Both the Commission and the Legislature have instituted electronic registration and compensation reporting.²⁰ Executive branch lobbyists, however, must supply a written oath to complete each registration as well as a signed statement of authority from the principal.²¹

Compensation reporting is subject to random audits and, in the case of executive branch lobbying firms, findings of non-compliance are reported to the Commission for investigation.²²

The executive branch lobbyist registration and reporting law provides specific procedures for its enforcement.²³ The Commission reports probable cause findings to the Governor and Cabinet for appropriate action, which can include a fine up to \$5,000 and prohibition from lobbying for up to two years.²⁴ A person accused of violating the

⁹ The FEC can impose civil fines of up to \$2,500 per violation, increasing for repeated offenses. It may also pursue civil or criminal actions, including injunctions and restraining orders to prevent violations or block the certification of election results if probable cause exists. Ss. [106.265](#), and [106.27, F.S.](#)

¹⁰ Chs. 97-106, F.S., are known as the Florida Election Code. S. [97.011, F.S.](#)

¹¹ See ch. [106, F.S.](#)

¹² S. [106.1405, F.S.](#)

¹³ S. [106.22\(6\) and \(10\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴ S. [106.141, F.S.](#)

¹⁵ See ss. [106.071](#), [106.1436](#), [106.1439](#), and [106.147, F.S.](#)

¹⁶ S. [112.3215, F.S.](#) The Commission is an independent body established to enforce ethical standards for state and local officers and employees. It consists of nine bipartisan members appointed by the Governor, subject to Senate confirmation, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Senate President. Members serve two-year terms with a two-term limit and are prohibited from lobbying or holding public employment. The Commission ensures transparency and accountability in government, as outlined in [Art. II, s. 8\(f\), FLA. CONST.](#) Ss. [112.320](#) and [112.321\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷ S. [11.045, F.S.](#) and Joint Rule 1.

¹⁸ S. [112.3215\(3\), F.S.](#); Joint Rule 1.2.

¹⁹ S. [112.3215\(5\)\(a\)1, F.S.](#); Joint Rule 1.4(1).

²⁰ S. [112.32155, F.S.](#); Joint Rule 1.1(2)(f)

²¹ S. [112.3215\(3\), F.S.](#)

²² S. [112.3215\(8\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

²³ S. [112.3215\(8\) and \(9\), F.S.](#)

²⁴ S. [112.3215 \(9\) and \(10\), F.S.](#)

lobbyist registration law may also request a hearing within 14 days of the mailing of the probable cause notification.²⁵

Federal Elections Campaign Act

The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (FECA), as amended, prohibits any foreign national from directly or indirectly making a contribution, donation, expenditure, or disbursement in connection with a federal, state, or local election in the U.S.²⁶ Under the Act, a “foreign national” is defined to include both individuals and entities. This includes any individual who is not a U.S. citizen or national and who has not been lawfully admitted for permanent residence, as well as any partnership, association, corporation, organization, or other combination of persons that is organized under the laws of, or has its principal place of business in, a foreign country. FECA defines an “election” to encompass not only general, special, primary, and runoff elections but also conventions or caucuses of political parties that have the authority to nominate candidates.²⁷

Foreign Agents Registration Act

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), enacted in 1938, mandates that certain individuals and entities engaged in political activities and acting on behalf of foreign governments, political parties, or other foreign principals register with the U.S. Department of Justice and disclose their activities, funding sources, and relationships.²⁸ The purpose of FARA is to ensure transparency in efforts to influence U.S. government policies, elections, and public opinion on behalf of foreign interests.²⁹ The FARA unit, part of the Counterintelligence and Export Control Section within the National Security Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, oversees the law’s enforcement and administration.³⁰

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Government Operations Subcommittee State Affairs Committee	16 Y, 0 N	3/18/2025	Toliver	Villa

²⁵ S. [112.3215\(9\), F.S.](#)

²⁶ 52 U.S.C. § 30121.

²⁷ 52 U.S.C. § 30101(1).

²⁸ See 22 U.S.C. § 612(a).

²⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, [Foreign Agents Registration Act Frequently Asked Questions](#) (last visited March 14, 2025).

³⁰ U.S. Department of Justice, [Foreign Agents Registration Act](#) (last visited March 14, 2025).