

**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 Ethics and Elections

BILL: SB 500

INTRODUCER: Senator Avila

SUBJECT: Security for Statewide Constitutional Office Candidates

DATE: January 14, 2026      REVISED: 1/13/2026      \_\_\_\_\_

| ANALYST          | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE  | ACTION           |
|------------------|----------------|------------|------------------|
| 1. <u>Cleary</u> | <u>Roberts</u> | <u>EE</u>  | <u>Favorable</u> |
| 2. _____         | _____          | <u>ACJ</u> | _____            |
| 3. _____         | _____          | <u>FP</u>  | _____            |

## I. Summary:

SB 500 requires the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to provide certain candidates with protective security detail for a specified time period.

Security would be provided to major-party nominees for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Cabinet offices after the Elections Canvassing Commission (ECC) certifies the primary election results and continue until the nominee either concedes the general election or the general election results are officially certified.

The bill requires FDLE to provide protective security detail to the officers-elect until the officers-elect assume office.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

## II. Present Situation:

According to nationwide studies, there has been an increase in the rise of polarization in American politics that coincides with an increase in observed threats to public officials, which have steadily risen in the past decade, culminating in actual acts of violence, assassination or attempted assassination of public officials.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence suggests the prevalence of threats to public officials is perceived to be growing and exerting pressure on public officials and systems of governance.<sup>2</sup> In terms of the type of public

<sup>1</sup> Simon A. Levin, Helen V. Milner, and Charles Perrings, “*The dynamics of political polarization*,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 118:50 (2021).

<sup>2</sup> Simi Pete, Ligon Gina, Hughes Seamus, Standridge Natalie, “*Rising Threats to Public Officials: A Review of 10 Years of Federal Data*, CTC Sentinel (May 2024), (“[T]he data reveals something new emerged during the past decade: a concentration of threats that began to spike in 2017 corresponding with a general increase in polarization following the 2016

officials targeted with threats of violence, elected officials were among the most common at 41 percent of the threat targets.<sup>3</sup>

Currently in Florida, there is no protective security provided from state law enforcement to nominees of any political party for state office. FDLE<sup>4</sup> is directed by Section 943.68, F.S., to provide and maintain security for:

- The Governor, the Governor's immediate family, the Governor's office, mansion, and grounds;<sup>5</sup>
- Visiting governors and families upon request by the Governor;<sup>6</sup> and
- Other persons visiting the state for whom such services are requested by the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, a member of the Cabinet, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and for whom the failure to provide security or transportation could result in a clear and present danger to the personal safety of such persons or could result in public embarrassment to the state.<sup>7</sup>

FDLE is directed to coordinate all protective services with the United States Department of State and the United States Secret Service when requested to do so by such agencies or by the Governor or member of the Cabinet.<sup>8</sup>

FDLE is required to submit a report each August 15th to the Governor, the Legislature, and the Cabinet detailing all transportation and protective services provided under sections 943.68(1), (5), and (6), F.S. within the preceding fiscal year.<sup>9</sup>

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presidential election. While 2013-2016 had on average 38 federal charges involving threats to public officials per year, that average sharply increased during the period of 2017-2022, with the average number of federal charges increasing to 62 per year. It seems the clamor of threats to public officials has grown louder since 2017, with gradual, steady increases").

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

<sup>4</sup> *Structure of the Florida Cabinet*, The Governor & Cabinet of the State of Florida Website, <https://www.cabinet.myflorida.com/> (last visited 1/5/2026) (The Department maintains a dual role of direct investigative and enforcement responsibilities along with assisting other state law enforcement agencies—serving as the primary statewide investigative agency concerning organized, complex, and multi-jurisdictional crimes. The Department also provides administrative and technological support to criminal justice agencies through all of its organizational divisions and delivers a comprehensive information system of investigative, intelligence, operational and management data through the Florida Intelligence Center (FIC) and the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC), which is interfaced with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC)); *See Protective Operations*, Florida Department of Law Enforcement webpage, <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/regions-divisions/protective-operations> (Last visited January 5, 2026) (FDLE's Protective operations section has been providing protective operations for the Governor and first family since 1973. Special agents in this detail routinely work holidays, nights and weekends and must maintain the confidentiality and trust of the Governor and first family. In addition to Protective Operations providing critical protection for the Governor and first family, they also provide protection for the Governor's office, Governor's mansion and grounds. The Protective Operations Section is also authorized to provide protection and transportation for visiting governors and other dignitaries when requested).

<sup>5</sup> Section 943.68(1), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 943.68(5), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 943.68(6), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 943.68(8), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 943.68(9), F.S.; *See* Commissioner Mark Glass, *Florida Department of Law Enforcement Transportation and Protective Services Report July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025* (August 15, 2025),

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/26074041/tps-2024-25-report.pdf> (The total amount for protective costs for the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025 was \$11,146.541.29. The costs incurred for protective services for the Governor, the Governor's Office, Governor's Family, Mansion, and grounds for the period of July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, was \$10,657,189.62. For the same period, 113 protective details were performed for visiting dignitaries totaling \$489,351.67).

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates 99.112, F.S., requiring:

- FDLE, upon the adjournment of the meeting of the ECC certifying the results of the primary election under s. 102.111, F.S.,<sup>10</sup> to provide protective security detail to all nominees of major political parties,<sup>11</sup> for the offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Cabinet Officers.<sup>12</sup>
- Protective security detail to be provided from the immediate adjournment of the meeting of the ECC certifying the results of the primary election until the relevant nominees concede the general election or upon adjournment of the meeting of the ECC certifying the results of the general election.
- FDLE to continue to provide protective security detail to the officers-elect until the officers-elect assume office.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

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

None.

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

None.

#### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

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<sup>10</sup> S. 102.111, F.S. (The Elections Canvassing Commission consists of the Governor and two members of the Cabinet selected by the Governor. The Commission is required to meet at 8 a.m. on the 9<sup>th</sup> day after a primary election and at 8 a.m. on the 14<sup>th</sup> day after a general election to certify the returns of the election for each federal, state, and multicounty office and for each constitutional amendment).

<sup>11</sup> See *Political Parties*, Florida Department of State web page, <https://dos.fl.gov/elections/candidates-committees/political-parties/> (last visited January 13, 2026) (There are only two major political parties in Florida, 1) Republican Party of Florida, and 2) Florida Democratic Party).

<sup>12</sup> *Structure of the Florida Cabinet*, The Governor & Cabinet of the State of Florida Website, <https://www.cabinet.myflorida.com/> (last visited January 5, 2026) (Florida, under Article IV of the Florida Constitution has four statewide elected constitutional offices that form the Governor and Cabinet. These officials are elected by voters across the entire state and, along with the Governor, comprise the Florida Cabinet, which acts as a collective decision-making body for several key state agencies. **Governor** – The chief executive officer of the state. **Lieutenant Governor** – a constitutional officer but is elected on a joint ticket with the Governor, rather than independently statewide. **Attorney General** – The state's chief legal officer and head of the Department of Legal Affairs. **Chief Financial Officer** – Oversees the state's finances, acts as the State Fire Marshal, and heads the Department of Financial Services. **Commissioner of Agriculture** – Safeguards the public through food product testing and inspection, manages public lands, and heads the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

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

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

FDLE estimates the bill will increase the workload of existing FDLE agents. Additional costs and resources are needed to comply with the new requirements.

If the bill becomes law, FDLE requests rental vehicles, travel, and overtime costs for 20 Protective Operations Special Agents, specifically:

- Overtime for existing protective operations positions - \$622,773;
- Rental vehicles - \$60,130 (nonrecurring);
- Additional travel - \$480,000 (nonrecurring);
- Soft body armor - \$3,250 (nonrecurring); and
- Vehicle armor - \$20,000 (nonrecurring).

FDLE estimates the Total Fiscal Impact as \$1,186,153 (\$563,380 nonrecurring).<sup>13</sup>

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The term “Minor Political Parties” is not specifically defined in the bill. But the term “Minor Political Parties,” is defined in the Election Code under section 97.021(20), F.S. “as any group as specified in s. 103.095 which on January 1 preceding a primary election does not have registered as members 5 percent of the total registered electors of the state.” According to the Florida Department of State currently there are only two major political parties recognized in the State Florida: 1) Republican Party of Florida, and 2) Florida Democratic Party.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement, *Senate Bill Analysis 500 Agency Analysis* (Jan. 6, 2026) (on file with the Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections).

<sup>14</sup> See Political Parties, Florida Department of State web page, <https://dos.fl.gov/elections/candidates-committees/political-parties/> (last visited January 13, 2026)

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates the following section of the Florida Statutes: 99.122

**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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