

**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 Criminal Justice

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BILL: SB 52

INTRODUCER: Senator Gaetz

SUBJECT: Security Services at Places of Worship

DATE: January 9, 2026

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Cellon	Stokes	CJ	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			JU	
3.			RC	

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## I. Summary:

SB 52 amends s. 493.6102, F.S., to provide that the provisions of Ch. 493 are inapplicable to volunteers who provide armed security services on the premises of a church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship under the following circumstances:

- Such services are provided subject to an armed security plan approved by the sheriff's office in that county;
- The security services are provided exclusively on the premises of the church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship, including any property owned or leased by the religious institution for worship, education, or religious activities; and
- The volunteer:
  - Passes a level 2 background screening;
  - Holds a valid Florida concealed weapon or concealed firearm license; and
  - Does not receive compensation for the security services.

The bill does not impact state revenues or expenditures. *See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.*  
The bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.

## II. Present Situation:

### Violence at Houses of Worship

According to research spanning from 2000 to 2024, there have been nearly 380 incidents of violence at houses of worship in the U.S. resulting in approximately 490 deaths and 170 injuries.<sup>1</sup> The majority of homicides at houses of worship are not related to the religious ideology

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<sup>1</sup> The Violence Prevention Project Research Center, Hamline University, Saint Paul Minnesota, available at <https://www.theviolenceproject.org/house-of-worship-homicides/> (last viewed January 6, 2026).

of where they occur, but the killings that *are* ideologically motivated have been among the most deadly.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the best way to mitigate a potential attack is to take a holistic approach to security. This requires assigning clear roles and responsibilities for making security decisions, planning, and implementing the procedures and capabilities across the organization. A robust security plan should be tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the house of worship.<sup>3</sup> The CISA suggests the following options for consideration:

- Establish a multi-layered plan for security, identifying clear roles and responsibilities for developing and implementing security measures.
- Create emergency action plans, business continuity plans, and incident response plans that are well communicated and exercised with the Safety Team for complete understanding.
- Conduct a vulnerability assessment to understand the risks to the house of worship from which you may prioritize implementing any subsequent safety measures.
- Build community readiness and resilience by establishing an organizational culture of caring where all members and visitors are properly supported, and credible threats are reported through previously identified channels.
- Apply physical security measures to monitor and protect the outer, middle, and inner perimeters, while respecting the purpose of each area of the house of worship.
- Focus on the safety of children by implementing safety measures around childcare, daycare, and schools.
- Implement cybersecurity best practices to safeguard important information and prevent a potential cyberattack.<sup>4</sup>

### **Division of Licensing**

The Division of Licensing (DOL) within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) administers Florida's concealed weapon licensing program<sup>5</sup> and oversees Florida's private investigative, private security, and recovery services industries.<sup>6</sup> The DOL's regulatory oversight of those services includes licensing, enforcing compliance standards, and ensuring public protection from unethical business practices and unlicensed activity.

Security services provided by a security officer who, for consideration, advertises as providing or performing security services which include:

- Providing bodyguard protection;
- Guarding property;
- Transporting prisoners;

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide, Resources, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, available at <https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/mitigating-attacks-houses-worship-security-guide> (last viewed January 6, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Section 790.06, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 493, F.S.

- Providing armored car services;
- Assisting in prevention of theft; and
- Assisting in prevention of the misappropriation or concealment of articles of value or assisting in the return of such articles.<sup>7</sup>

Any individual who performs the services of a security officer must have a Class “D” license.<sup>8</sup> To carry a firearm in the performance of regulated security duties, security officers and agency managers must also obtain a Class “G” Statewide Firearm License.<sup>9</sup> No employee may carry or be furnished a firearm unless it is required by her or his duties and it is carried only in connection with those duties. The firearm must be encased in full view at all times unless otherwise provided by law.<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 493, F.S., does not apply to specified persons and places including:

- Any individual who is an “officer,”<sup>11</sup> or is a law enforcement officer of the United States Government, while such local, state, or federal officer is engaged in her or his official duties or when performing off-duty security activities approved by her or his superiors;
- Any insurance investigator or adjuster licensed by a state or federal licensing authority when such person is providing services or expert advice within the scope of her or his license.
- Any attorney in the regular practice of her or his profession;
- Any bank or bank holding company, credit union, or small loan company operating pursuant to ch. 516 and 520, F.S.; any consumer credit reporting agency regulated under 15 U.S.C. ss. 1681 et seq.; or any collection agency not engaged in repossessions or to any permanent employee thereof;
- Any person who is a school crossing guard employed by a third party hired by a city or county and trained in accordance with s. 316.75, F.S.; or
- Any individual *employed as a security officer by a church* or ecclesiastical or denominational organization having an established physical place of worship in this state at which nonprofit religious services and activities are regularly conducted or by a church cemetery to provide security on the property of the organization or cemetery, *and who does not carry a firearm in the course of her or his duties.*<sup>12</sup>

### Carrying a Concealed Weapon or Firearm

A person is licensed or authorized to carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm if he or she is:

<sup>7</sup> The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Business Services, Private Security Licenses; available at [Private Security Licenses / Business Services / Home - Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#). (last viewed January 6, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> An applicant for a Class “D” Security Officer License must complete 40 hours of training at a licensed school or training facility or complete an acceptable alternative training. Consumer Services, Business Services, Private Security Licenses, available at <https://www.fdaacs.gov/Business-Services/Private-Security-Licenses>. (last viewed January 6, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> “Officer” means any person employed or appointed as a full-time, part-time, or auxiliary law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or correctional probation officer. Section 943.10(14), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> Section 493.6102(1)-(15), F.S.

- A concealed carry licensee;<sup>13</sup>
- Not licensed under s. 790.06, F.S. but otherwise satisfies the criteria for receiving and maintaining such a license;<sup>14</sup>

Anyone licensed or authorized to carry a concealed firearm must carry identification and display it to law enforcement when asked to do so.<sup>15</sup>

Section 790.06(12), 1.-15., F.S., lists the locations where a concealed carry license or authorization *does not permit* a person to carry a weapon, or firearm, or openly carry a handgun.<sup>16</sup> These locations are:

- Places of nuisance;<sup>17</sup>
- Police, sheriff, or highway patrol stations;
- Detention facilities, prisons, or jails;
- Courthouses;
- Courtrooms, except that nothing in this section precludes a judge from carrying a concealed weapon or concealed firearm or determining who will carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm in his or her courtroom;
- Polling places;
- Meetings of the governing body of a county, public school district, municipality, or special district;
- Meetings of the Legislature or a committee thereof;
- Schools, colleges, or professional athletic events not related to firearms;
- Elementary or secondary school facilities or administration buildings;
- Career centers;
- Establishments licensed to dispense alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises, which portion of the establishment is primarily devoted to such purpose;
- College or university facilities unless the licensee is a registered student, employee, or faculty member of such college or university and the weapon is a stun gun or nonlethal electric weapon or device designed solely for defensive purposes and the weapon does not fire a dart or projectile;
- Inside of a passenger terminal or sterile area of any airport, provided that no person shall be prohibited from carrying any legal firearm into the terminal, which firearm is encased for shipment for purposes of checking such firearm as baggage to be lawfully transported on any aircraft; or
- Places where the carrying of firearms is prohibited by federal law.<sup>18</sup>

The Legislature has addressed the issue of concealed carry by providing that for the purposes of safety, security, personal protection, or any other lawful purpose, a person licensed under s. 790.06, F.S., may carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm on property owned, rented,

<sup>13</sup> Section 790.01(1)(a), F.S., if the person has met the criteria to qualify for a license under s. 790.06, (2)(a)-(f) and (i)-(n), (3), and (10), F.S., and received the license.

<sup>14</sup> Section 790.01(1)(b), F.S.,

<sup>15</sup> Sections 790.06(1)(c) and 790.013(1), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Sections 790.06(12) and 790.013(2), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 823.05, F.S., provides a list of public nuisances.

leased, borrowed, or lawfully used by a church, synagogue, or other religious institution. However, the private property rights of a church, synagogue, or other religious institution are not limited and the church, synagogue, or other religious institution may exercise control over such property.<sup>19</sup>

### **Level 2 Background Screening**

A Level 2 Background Screening refers to a state and national fingerprint-based check and consideration of disqualifying offenses, and applies to those employees designated by law as holding positions of responsibility or trust.<sup>20</sup>

For example, health care practitioners must comply with background screening requirements when applying for initial licensure or renewing their license. Section 435.04, F.S., mandates Level 2 security background investigations be conducted on employees, defined as individuals required by law to be fingerprinted pursuant to ch. 435, F.S.<sup>21</sup>

Security background investigations under s. 435.04, F.S., must ensure that persons:

- Have not been arrested for and are awaiting final disposition of;
- Have not been found guilty of, regardless of adjudication, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to; or
- Have not been adjudicated delinquent and the record has not been sealed or expunged for, any offense prohibited under any of the provisions of state law or similar law of another jurisdiction that are disqualifying offenses.

Disqualifying offenses include in part:

- Section 825.1025, F.S., lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Section 874.05, F.S., encouraging or recruiting another to join a criminal gang; and
- Section 782.04, F.S., relating to murder.

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

The bill adds subsection (16) to s. 493.6102, F.S., making regulations<sup>22</sup> in ch. 493, F.S., inapplicable to volunteers who provide armed security services on the premises of a church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship, provided that all of the following conditions are met:

- Such services are provided subject to an armed security plan approved by the sheriff's office in that county;

<sup>19</sup> Section 790.06(13), F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 110.1127, F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Fingerprint retention requirements do not apply to these professions: Emergency medical technicians, paramedics, pharmacy interns, registered pharmacy technicians, and radiologic technologists are exempt unless applying through the military active-duty spouse licensure pathway.

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 493 of the Florida Statutes regulates private investigative, private security, and repossession services. Sections 493.6100 – 493.6406, F.S.

- The security services are provided exclusively on the premises of the church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship, including any property owned or leased by the religious institution for worship, education, or religious activities; and
- The volunteer:
  - Passes a level 2 background screening;
  - Holds a valid Florida concealed weapon or concealed firearm license; and;
  - Does not receive compensation for the security services.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.

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

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

The bill does not appear to require cities and counties to expend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified by Article VII, s., of the State Constitution.

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

None.

##### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

##### **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:**

The bill requires the volunteer armed security guard who provides security services on the premises of a church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship pass a level 2 background screening pursuant to s. 435.04, F.S. The background screening process includes payment to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) for the costs related to the necessary state and federal fingerprint record reviews. The bill does not specify whether the places of worship will pay the cost or if it will be borne by the

volunteer; therefore the citizen volunteer may experience some fiscal impact from the bill.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill requires the place of worship to obtain to an armed security plan approved by the sheriff's office in that county as a condition of implementing the armed volunteer security plan provided for in the bill. The bill does not provide whether the sheriff's office will be reimbursed by the place of worship or the sheriff's office will absorb the cost involved in the approval process.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 493.6102, 493.6201.

**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.