

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 572

INTRODUCER: Senator Harrell

SUBJECT: Ethics for Public Employees

DATE: January 14, 2026 REVISED: _____

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. <u>Cleary</u>	<u>Roberts</u>	<u>EE</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2. _____	_____	<u>GO</u>	_____
3. _____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 572 revises the definition of the term “relative” in the Code of Ethics for the purpose of Florida’s gifts law, to include foster parents and foster children, adding these individuals to the exception to the gifts law’s prohibitions and reporting requirements.

Further, the bill reenacts s. 1001.421, F.S., relating to gifts to district school board members, to incorporate the amendment made to the term “relative” under the Code of Ethics.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

The Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (Code of Ethics)¹ establishes ethical standards for public officials and is intended to ensure that public officials conduct themselves independently and impartially, not using their offices for private gain other than compensation provided by law.² The Code of Ethics addresses various issues, such as ethics trainings, voting conflicts, full and public disclosure of financial interests, standards of conduct, and the Commission on Ethics, among other things.³

¹ See pt. III. Ch. 112, F.S.

² Florida Commission on Ethics, *Guide to the Sunshine Amendment and Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees*, p. 1., available at <https://ethics.state.fl.us/Documents/Publications/GuideBookletInternet.pdf?cp=202619> (last visited January 9, 2026)

³ See pt III. Ch. 112, F.S.

The Code of Ethics' gifts law provides that Reporting Individuals⁴ and Procurement Employees⁵ (RIPE) do not have any restrictions related to accepting gifts from relatives.⁶ The law also provides that RIPE do not have to disclose gifts given to them by relatives, irrespective of their monetary value.⁷ Section 112.313(21), F.S., defines the term "relative" for purposes of Florida's gifts law.⁸ The current statutory definition of the term "relative" is broad and includes persons sharing the same legal residence, as well as those who are engaged to be married.⁹ However, this definition does not include the current and former foster children and foster parents of a RIPE, therefore such persons are subject to the gifts law.¹⁰

Gifts to district school board members are governed by s. 1001.421, F.S.. District school board members and their "relatives" are prohibited from directly or indirectly soliciting any gift, or directly or indirectly accepting any gift in excess of \$50, from any person, vendor, potential vendor, or other entity doing business with the school district. The term "relative" under s. 1001.421, F.S., uses the same definition as that in the Code of Ethics.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill revises the definition of the term "relative" in the Code of Ethics to include foster parents and foster children. In effect, current and former foster children and foster parents of a RIPE would now be included under the exception to the Code of Ethics' gifts law's restrictions and reporting requirements.

Further, the bill incorporates the changes made to the Code of Ethics definition of "relative" to s. 1001.421, F.S., relating to the gifts law prohibitions for district school board members and their "relatives."

⁴ Section 112.3148(2)(d), F.S. (**Reporting individual** "means any individual, including a candidate upon qualifying, who is required by law, pursuant to s. 8, Art. II of the State Constitution or s. 112.3145, to file full or limited public disclosure of his or her financial interests or any individual who has been elected to, but has yet to officially assume the responsibilities of, public office").

⁵ Section 112.3148(2)(e), F.S., (**Procurement employee** "means any employee of an officer, department, board, commission, council, or agency of the executive branch or judicial branch of state government who has participated in the preceding 12 months through decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, preparation of any part of a purchase request, influencing the content of any specification or procurement standard, rendering of advice, investigation, or auditing or in any other advisory capacity in the procurement of contractual services or commodities as defined in s. 287.012, if the cost of such services or commodities exceeds or is expected to exceed \$10,000 in any fiscal year").

⁶ See s. 112.3148, F.S.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ The full definition provides: 'Relative,' unless otherwise specified in this part, means an individual who is related to a public officer or employee as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother, half sister, grandparent, great grandparent, grandchild, great grandchild, step grandparent, step great grandparent, step grandchild, step great grandchild, person who is engaged to be married to the public officer or employee or who otherwise holds himself or herself out as or is generally known as the person whom the public officer or employee intends to marry or with whom the public officer or employee intends to form a household, or any other natural person having the same legal residence as the public officer or employee.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

The Commission on Ethics proposed these changes in their Legislative Recommendations for the 2026 Legislative Session.¹¹

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.

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:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

¹¹ *Legislative Recommendations for 2026*, Florida Commission on Ethics Memorandum, (dated September 18, 2025), <https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/DownloadMeetingDocument/7839> (The Commission makes the recommendation because foster parents do not necessarily adopt the children they foster, but these foster parents and foster children often maintain a familial relationship through their lives, even after their legal relationship ends).

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 112.312 and 1001.421.

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.

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