

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: HB 603	COMPANION BILL: CS/SB 572 (Harrell)
TITLE: Ethics for Public Employees	LINKED BILLS: None
SPONSOR(S): López, J.	RELATED BILLS: None
FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 113 Y's 0 N's	GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Approved

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill adds former foster parents and current and former foster children to the definition of “relative” under the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees for purposes of the gift ban and disclosure requirements. The bill allows a board, council, commission, or collegial body on which a public elected official serves to appoint, employ, promote, or advance a relative, who is also an elected public official serving on the same entity.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

HB 603 passed as [CS/SB 572](#). (Please note that bill section parentheticals do not contain hyperlinks to bill sections for Senate bills.)

The bill changes the definition of “[relative](#)” under the [Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees](#) to include former foster parents and current and former foster children for the purposes of the [gift ban](#) and [disclosure requirements](#) for public officers and employees. (Section 1)

The bill provides an exception to the [restriction on employment of relatives](#) by public officials by allowing a board, council, commission, or collegial body on which a publicly elected official serves to appoint, employ, promote, or advance a relative, who is an elected public official serving on the same entity. (Section 2)

The bill reenacts sections of law to incorporate the changes made by the bill. (Multiple sections)

The bill was approved by the Governor on April 1, 2026, [ch. 2026-22, L.O.F.](#), and became effective on that date. (Section 16)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

[The Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees](#)

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 pertains to various ethical issues, such as receiving gifts, voting conflicts, disclosure of financial interests, and standards of conduct. The Commission on Ethics (Commission), a nine-member body, is an independent entity “responsible for

¹ See Pt. III, Ch. 112, F.S.; see also [art. II, s. 8\(h\)\(1\), FLA. CONST.](#)

² Florida Commission on Ethics, [Guide to the Sunshine Amendment and Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees](#) (last visited Mar. 25, 2026).

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investigating and issuing public reports on complaints of breach of the public trust by public officers and employees.”³

Under the Code of Ethics, political subdivisions and agencies are permitted to impose additional or more stringent standards of conduct and disclosure requirements upon their own officers and employees.⁴ However, such standards of conduct or disclosure requirements may not conflict with the Code of Ethics.⁵

Disclosure of Financial Interests

All elected constitutional officers, as well as candidates for such offices, are required by the Florida Constitution to file “full and public disclosure of their financial interests.”⁶ The term “full and public disclosure of financial interests” means the reporting individual must disclose his or her net worth and the value of each asset and liability in excess of \$1,000.⁷ The disclosure must be accompanied by either a copy of the filer’s most recent federal income tax return or a sworn statement that identifies each separate source and amount of income that exceeds \$1,000.⁸ The Commission has created by rule CE Form 6 (Form 6) to be used to make the required full and public financial disclosure.⁹ Reporting individuals must file Form 6 annually with the Commission by 11:59 p.m.¹⁰ on July 1.¹¹ Additionally, candidates for a constitutional office must make a full and public disclosure of their financial interests at the time of qualifying.

Current law requires a less detailed disclosure of financial interests using the Commission’s CE Form 1 (Form 1) for specified state officers¹² and employees,¹³ certain local officers,¹⁴ and specified appointive officers.¹⁵ Form 1 requires those individuals to disclose their primary sources of income (other than their public position), secondary sources of income, real property, intangible personal property, liabilities, and interests in specific businesses. Although no specific dollar values of incomes, property, or liabilities are required to be reported, the filer must report which assets or liabilities exceed certain dollar thresholds.¹⁶ Form 1 filers must disclose all sources of income in excess of \$2,500 (excluding public salary), all sources of income from a business entity that the filers had a material interest in which their gross income was in excess of \$5,000 and in excess of 10 percent of the business’ gross income. Form 1 filers must also disclose any property, except for their residence or vacation home, in which the person owns more than 5 percent of the value of the property, as well as any intangible property in excess of \$10,000 and any liability in excess of \$10,000.¹⁷ Form 1 must be filed annually with the Commission by 11:59 p.m.¹⁸ on July 1.¹⁹

³ Florida Commission on Ethics, [About Us](#) (last visited Mar. 25, 2026).

⁴ [S. 112.326\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁵ [S. 112.326\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁶ [Art. II, s. 8\(a\), FLA. CONST.](#)

⁷ [Art. II, s. 8\(j\)\(1\), FLA. CONST.](#)

⁸ *Id.*; see also [s. 112.3144, F.S.](#)

⁹ [S. 112.3144\(8\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰ [S. 112.3144\(8\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

¹¹ [S. 112.3145\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹² [S. 112.3145\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹³ [S. 112.3145\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴ [S. 112.3145\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵ [S. 112.3145, F.S.](#)

¹⁶ [S. 112.3145\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷ [S. 112.3145\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹⁸ [S. 112.3144\(8\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

¹⁹ [S. 112.3145\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

Relatives under the Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics provides several exceptions to its requirements for relatives of public officers and employees. A “relative” is defined to mean a person who has one of the following relationships with the public officer or employee:²⁰

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	

The term “relative” also includes a person 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.²¹ Lastly, the term includes any natural person having the same legal residence as the public officer or employee.²²

Gift Ban and Relatives

Public officers,²³ state agency employees, local government attorneys, and candidates for office are prohibited from soliciting or accepting anything of value, including a gift,²⁴ loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor, or service, based upon an understanding that their vote, official action, or judgment would be influenced.²⁵ An individual who has to disclose his or her financial interests on a Form 1 or a Form 6 and procurement employees²⁶ are prohibited from receiving, directly or indirectly, gifts from certain individuals—lobbyists lobbying his or her agency, vendors doing business with his or her agency, political committees—if he or she reasonably knows that the gift has a value of more than \$100.²⁷ However, reporting individuals and procurement employees are permitted to receive gifts having a value in excess of \$100 if the gift is received on behalf of a governmental entity or a charitable organization, provided the gift is promptly transferred to the intended entity or organization.²⁸

²⁰ [S. 121.312\(12\), F.S.](#)

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ “Public officer” includes any person elected or appointed to hold office in any agency, including any person serving on an advisory body. [S. 112.313\(1\), F.S.](#)

²⁴ A “gift” means anything accepted by a person or on that person’s behalf, whether directly or indirectly, for that person’s benefit, and for which equal or greater consideration is not given within 90 days of the receipt of the gift. The term “gift” includes real property or the use thereof; tangible or intangible personal property or the use thereof; a preferential rate or terms on a transaction not available to others similarly situated; forgiveness of a debt; transportation (unless provided by an agency in relation to officially approved governmental business), lodging, or parking; food or beverage; dues, fees, and tickets; plants and flowers; personal services for which a fee is normally charged by the provider; and any other thing or service having an attributable value. [S. 112.312\(12\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁵ [S. 112.313\(2\), F.S.](#)

²⁶ A “procurement employee” is 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. . . if the cost of such services or commodities exceeds or is expected to exceed \$10,000 in any fiscal year. [S. 112.3148\(2\)\(e\), F.S.](#)

²⁷ [S. 112.3148\(4\), F.S.](#)

²⁸ [Ss. 112.3148\(4\)](#) and [112.3148\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

Despite these general prohibitions, a reporting individual (or procurement employee) is permitted by law to accept gifts of any value from relatives without being required to disclose those gifts or their value to the Commission.²⁹

Gift Disclosure Requirements and Relatives

All reporting individuals (those filing Form 1 and Form 6) and procurement employees who receive a gift that is not prohibited and is worth more than \$100 must report such information by submitting a Quarterly Gift Disclosure to the Commission (CE Form 9)³⁰ no later than the last day of a calendar quarter following the quarter in which the gift was received.³¹ Gifts from relatives are not required to be reported to the Commission.³²

Restriction on Employment of Relatives

Current law prohibits public officials from using their authority to benefit a relative in public employment.³³ Public officials are prohibited from appointing, employing, promoting, advancing, or advocating for the appointment, promotion, or advancement of a relative if the position is in the agency³⁴ where the official is serving or over which the official exercises jurisdiction or control.³⁵ The law also prohibits a collegial body from appointing, employing, promoting, or advancing the position of an individual if a relative of the individual serves on the collegial body.³⁶

²⁹ [S. 112.3148\(1\) and \(8\), F.S.](#)

³⁰ See Commission on Ethics, [Form 9 Quarterly Gift Disclosure \(Gifts over \\$100\)](#) (last visited Mar. 25, 2026).

³¹ [S. 112.3148\(8\), F.S.](#)

³² [S. 112.3148\(8\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

³³ [S. 112.3135, F.S.](#)

³⁴ An “agency” means a state agency (except an institution under the jurisdiction of the Board of Governors); an office, agency, or other establishment in the legislative or Judicial branch; a county; a city; and any other political subdivision of the state (except a district school board or community college district). [S. 112.3135\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

³⁵ [S. 112.3135\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

³⁶ A “collegial body” means a governmental entity marked by power or authority vested equally in each of a number of colleagues. [S. 112.3135\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)