

**STORAGE NAME:** h0015s1a.jud

**DATE:** January 4, 1999

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
BILL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

**BILL #:** CS/HB 15

**RELATING TO:** Culpable Negligence

**SPONSOR(S):** Committee on Crime and Punishment and Representative Futch

**COMPANION BILL(S):** SB 74

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) CRIME AND PUNISHMENT YEAS 7 NAYS 0
  - (2) JUDICIARY
  - (3) GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS
  - (4) GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS
  - (5)
- 

**I. SUMMARY:**

CS/HB 15 creates the offense of culpable negligence by causing public financial injury. The offense occurs when any person has been given custody and control of public property, causes losses of the assets in excess of \$100,000 over a 12-month period through culpable negligence.

The new offense is classified as a 3rd-degree felony if the loss to the state is valued at \$1 million or more or as a misdemeanor of the first degree if the loss to the state is valued at between \$ 100,000 and \$1 million.

Additionally, CS/HB 15 requires notice of the existence of the new offense to accompany every state contract in excess of \$50,000. HB 15 provides that failure to provide such notice does not constitute a defense to the crime.

CS/HB 15 also provides for prosecution of the offense of culpable negligence by any state attorney or by the statewide prosecutor.

The bill has an effective date of July 1 of the year in which enacted.

The fiscal impact of CS/HB 15 will be determined by the Criminal Justice Estimating Conference.

II. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

**Theft**

A person commits theft if he or she knowingly obtains or uses, or endeavors to obtain or to use, the property of another with intent to, either temporarily or permanently:

(a) Deprive the other person of a right to the property or a benefit from the property.

(b) Appropriate the property to his or her own use or to the use of any person not entitled to the use of the property. See, s. 812.014, F.S.

Theft requires proof of specific intent to steal and gross negligence is not sufficient to prove theft.

**Conspiracy**

In order to be convicted of conspiracy, it must be proved the person agreed, conspired, combined or confederated with another with the object of that conspiracy to commit the underlying crime. See, s. 777.04, F.S. In order to prove a person conspired with another to steal state assets, a prosecutor needs testimony from one of the conspirators or documentation of their illegal agreement. Naturally, conspiracies are difficult to prove since criminals rarely memorialize their crime in a written document. Nor may they be forced to give testimony against themselves. See, Article I, Section 9 of the Florida Constitution (right to remain silent).

**Culpable Negligence**

**Negligence** is defined by Black's Law Dictionary as: The failure to use such care as a reasonably prudent and careful person would use under similar circumstances; or the doing of some act which a person of ordinary prudence would not have done under similar circumstances. Negligence is characterized by inadvertence.

**Gross negligence** is the intentional failure to perform a manifest duty in reckless disregard of the consequences as affecting the life or property of another. Gross negligence is characterized by a conscious indifference to the rights and welfare of persons affected.

**Culpable negligence** is often called "criminal negligence." Culpable negligence is the state of mind or intent which amounts to a reckless or willful indifference to the rights and welfare of persons affected. For example, aiming a gun at another and pulling the trigger will support a charge of manslaughter if the gun discharges and kills the person, even if the shooter thought the gun was unloaded and only meant to scare the victim. See, 782.07, F.S. Similarly, driving a car in a reckless manner which results in a fatal accident will support a charge of vehicular homicide. See, 782.071, F.S.

**B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

**New Offense**

CS/HB 15 creates a new offense of culpable negligence with four elements of proof, as follows:

- ▶ The person is entrusted with public property (see note below);
- ▶ The person through culpable negligence causes or through inaction allows to be caused losses to the state;
- ▶ the loss of state assets is in excess of \$100,000; and
- ▶ the loss occurs in any 12-month period.

Note: It is not clear from the bill's language whether, in cases where a public contract is entered into between a legal entity such as a corporation and the state, an employee or agent of the legal entity is entrusted with public property. The definition of "entrust" could be modified to clear up this ambiguity.

**Definitions**

Culpable negligence means negligence of a gross and flagrant character which evinces a reckless disregard for the state financial assets entrusted to a contract manager and leads to a presumption of indifference to the consequences.

Public property means property which is owned by the state, any state agency, or any political subdivision of the state (see note below).

State means the state of Florida or any agency or political subdivision of the state.

Entrust means giving custody or control by any means, regardless of a fiduciary relationship.

Cause or through inaction allow to be caused losses means acting or failing to act under circumstances which would indicate that a loss of value would occur when such a loss could be foreseen or prevented, even though the loss was not actually intended.

Note: As presently written, the bill may be read to criminalize the acts of the state's investment fund managers. Pension and related investment funds are inherently risky, and as a matter of policy the management decisions of those persons responsible for the funds may not need to be subject to the bill's provisions. The definition of "public property" could be revised to exclude state-managed pension and investment funds.

**New Protection For State Assets**

CS/HB 15 requires **notice** to be given with any contract with the state with a value in excess of \$50,000 that they will be subject to criminal sanctions for failure to manage the state's assets with reasonable care and that failure to provide such notice shall not constitute a defense to the crime causing public financial injury.

**Penalty**

The new offense is punished as a **3rd-degree felony**, punishable by 5-years in prison and a \$5,000 fine if the loss is valued in excess of \$1 million or as a **misdemeanor of the first degree** if the loss sustained is valued at over \$100,000 but less than \$1 million.

It should be noted that the offense of **theft** in excess of \$100,000 is a 1st-degree felony and punishable by 30-years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

**Prosecution**

Prosecution for violations may be brought on behalf of the state by any state attorney or by the statewide prosecutor. Additionally, only the Department of Legal Affairs, any state attorney, or any state agency having jurisdiction over conduct violations may institute civil proceedings.

**Effective Date**

The act shall take effect July 1 of the year in which enacted.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

N/A

D. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

No.

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

Yes. The bill would increase the scope of responsibility of the state's law enforcement agencies with regard to state contract matters.

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

No.

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

(1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

(2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

(3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

N/A

b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

N/A

c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

N/A

d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

N/A

e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

N/A

3. Personal Responsibility:

a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

No.

b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

No.

4. Individual Freedom:

- a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

No.

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

No.

5. Family Empowerment:

- a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

- (1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

N/A

- (2) Who makes the decisions?

N/A

- (3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

- (4) Are families required to participate in a program?

N/A

- (5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

N/A

- b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

No.

- c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

E. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

The bill will create s. 812.030, F.S.

F. SECTION-BY-SECTION RESEARCH:

**Section 1:** Creating new offense of loss of state assets in excess of \$100,000 by culpable negligence, requiring a warning of the existence of new offense to accompany each state contract in excess of \$50,000, and providing for prosecution of the offense.

**Section 2:** Providing an effective date.

III. FISCAL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

2. Recurring Effects:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

2. Recurring Effects:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

See, FISCAL COMMENTS.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The Criminal Justice Estimating Conference determined that a similar bill last year did not have a fiscal impact. It is anticipated that the Conference will determine that CS/HB 15 does not have a fiscal impact.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill is exempt from the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution because it is a criminal law.

**STORAGE NAME:** h0015s1a.jud

**DATE:** January 4, 1999

**PAGE 9**

**B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:**

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

**C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:**

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

**V. COMMENTS:**

None.

**VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:**

The Committee Substitute differs from the original bill by clarifying the proscribed act, by making the technical changes to correct language to the definitions and specifying that **only** the Department of Legal Affairs, any state attorney or any state agency having jurisdiction may institute civil proceedings.

**VII. SIGNATURES:**

**COMMITTEE ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT:**

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

Johana P. Hatcher

J. Willis Renaut

**AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY:**

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

Michael W. Carlson

Don Rubottom