

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide Limited Government: If a county contains multiple cities, and all those cities reject a countywide provision governing land use, development or redevelopment of land, or voluntary annexation, the result could be multiple ordinances governing the same subjects within the county. For example, Broward County contains 31 cities. Each of these cities may choose to enact independent ordinances governing land use in the area.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

BACKGROUND

County Government

Although the state's first counties were established in 1821, the Florida Constitution of 1861 gave counties constitutional status for the first time. Counties were recognized as legal subdivisions of the state and the Legislature was granted the power to create new counties and alter county boundaries. By 1925, county boundaries were fixed and have, with a few minor changes, remained unchanged. Today, there are 67 counties in Florida. Home rule charters have been adopted in 19 counties, and 75% of the state's population resides in a charter county.¹ Nine charter counties contain more than nine municipalities, while Broward and Palm Beach contain 30 or more.

Article VIII, section 1 of the State Constitution requires the state to be divided by law into political subdivisions called "counties". Counties may be created, abolished, or the boundaries modified by law. The State Constitution recognizes two types of county government in Florida: 1) counties that are not operating under a county charter (non-charter counties) and 2) counties that are operating under a county charter adopted by the electors of the county in a countywide special election called for that purpose.

Article VIII, sections 1(f) and (g) of the State Constitution, respectively address non-charter and charter county powers as follows:

(f) Non-charter government. Counties not operating under county charters shall have such power of self-government as is provided by general or special law. The board of county commissioners of a county not operating under a charter may enact, in a manner prescribed by general law, county ordinances not inconsistent with general or special law, but an ordinance in conflict with a municipal ordinance shall not be effective within the municipality to the extent of such conflict.

(g) Charter government. Counties operating under county charters shall have all powers of local self-government not inconsistent with general law, or with special law approved by vote of the electors. The governing body of a county operating under a charter may enact county ordinances not inconsistent with general law. *The charter shall provide which shall prevail in the event of conflict between county and municipal ordinances.* [Emphasis added]

Perhaps the most significant difference between non-charter and charter county powers is that the constitution provides a direct constitutional grant of the power of self-government to a county operating

¹ The following counties have adopted charters: Alachua, Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Clay, Columbia, Miami-Dade (a consolidated city), Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, Leon, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota, Seminole, and Volusia.

under a charter approved by the electors of the county, whereas a non-charter county has only those powers the Legislature provides by general or special law.

Further, the Florida Supreme Court has concluded that section 1(g) “was intended to specifically give charter counties two powers unavailable to non-charter counties: the power to preempt conflicting municipal ordinances, and the power to avoid intervention of the legislature by special laws. The power to preempt is the power to exercise county power to the exclusion of municipal power. Preemption is a transfer of power, from exclusive municipal authority or concurrent authority, to exclusive county authority”.²

Under this constitutional grant of power, a county’s charter may authorize the county to regulate an activity on a countywide basis and provide that the county regulation prevails over any conflicting municipal ordinance.³ The Florida Supreme Court has concluded that section 1(g) permits “regulatory preemption by counties” and that a charter county may preempt a municipal regulatory power in such areas when county-wide uniformity will best further the ends of government.⁴ In addition to this grant of power, however, is the limitation imposed by the constitution, which grants charter counties all powers of self-government “not inconsistent with general law”. The interrelationship between the grant of power to determine which ordinances prevails and the limitation of charter county authority by general law is unclear and has not been directly addressed by the Florida courts. Therefore, the constitutionality of a general law that limits a charter county’s power to determine that county ordinances prevail over any conflicting municipal ordinances is uncertain.

Adoption of County Charters

A county that does not have a charter form of government may locally initiate and adopt a county home rule charter pursuant to the provisions of ss. 125.60-125.64, F.S. In addition to satisfying multiple statutory requirements, the charter must be adopted by a majority vote of the qualified electors of the county.

Upon petition by 15 percent of the qualified electors of a county or following adoption of a resolution by the board of county commissioners requesting that a charter commission be established, the charter commission must be appointed. The commission must conduct a comprehensive study of the operation of county government and of the ways it could be improved or reorganized. The commission must conduct three public hearings, vote upon a proposed charter at its last hearing, and forward the proposed charter to the board of county commissioners for the holding of a referendum election. Immediately after the commission submits a proposed charter, the board of county commissioners must call a special election within a specified time frame to determine whether the qualified electors of the county approve the proposed charter. If a majority of those voting disapprove the proposed charter, a new referendum may not be held for two years. Once adopted, the charter may be amended only by vote of the county electors.

Alternatively, the board of county commissioners may propose by ordinance a charter that is consistent with Part IV of ch. 125, F.S., the “Optional Charter County Law.” Section 125.86, F.S., specifies the powers and duties of the charter county, which include all powers of local self-government “not inconsistent with general law as recognized by the Constitution and laws of the state and which have not been limited by the charter.”

² *Broward County v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 480 So.2d 631 (Fla. 1985).

³ *Broward County v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 480 So.2d 631 (Fla. 1985); *City of New Smyrna Beach v. County of Volusia*, 518 So.2d 1379 (Fla. 1988).

⁴ *City of New Smyrna Beach v. County of Volusia*, 518 So.2d 1379 (Fla. 1988), citing *Broward County v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 480 So.2d 631 (Fla. 1985).

County Statutory Home Rule Powers

Section 125.01, F.S., grants broad home rule powers to non-charter and charter counties. These powers include the power to:

- Prepare and enforce comprehensive plans for the development of the county;
- Establish, coordinate, and enforce zoning and such business regulations as are necessary for the protection of the public;
- Adopt, by reference or in full, and enforce housing and related technical codes and regulations; establish and administer programs of housing, slum clearance, community redevelopment, conservation, flood and beach erosion control, air pollution control, and navigation and drainage and cooperate with governmental agencies and private enterprises in the development and operation of such programs; and
- Provide and regulate waste and sewage collection and disposal, water and alternative water supplies, including, but not limited to, reclaimed water and water from aquifer storage and recovery and desalination systems, and conservation programs.

The section specifically provides that the legislative purpose is to be liberally construed to grant all counties broad home rule powers authorized in the State Constitution. Under this broad grant of general law powers, specific statutory authority to enact ordinances or to deliver services to residents of the counties is not required. All counties have home rule authority to enact ordinances for any county purpose absent a general law limitation.

Section 125.86(7), F.S., vests the powers of a charter county in the board of county commissioners. One power explicitly granted to the board of county commissioners of a charter county is the power to “[a]dopt, pursuant to the provisions of the charter, such ordinances of countywide force and effect as are necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of the residents. It is the specific legislative intent to recognize that a county charter may properly determine that certain governmental areas are more conducive to uniform countywide enforcement and may provide the county government powers in relation to those areas as recognized and as may be amended from time to time by the people of that county”.

County Provisions Regarding Land Use⁵

In recent years, some charter counties have amended their charter to provide an exclusive method for annexation. Some counties have also enacted building height limitations that apply in municipal jurisdictions that are within the county. In addition, some counties exercise land use planning responsibility, in varying degrees, for municipalities located within the county and certain land use decisions within such municipalities may require county approval. These types of charter provisions or ordinances have the effect of preempting municipal authority with respect to land use planning.

For example, voters in Palm Beach and Seminole counties approved charter provisions relating to annexation in 2004. The Palm Beach county provision gave county commissioners the ability to set annexation guidelines by ordinance. Several municipalities challenged the charter amendment in circuit court.¹² The circuit court held, in part, that the provisions allowing the county to define the exclusive method for voluntary annexation, by ordinance, violates the requirement in s. 171.044(4), F.S., that an exclusive method of annexation be contained in the charter itself.¹³ Seminole County voters approved a charter amendment that would give the county final authority over land-use changes and development densities in certain portions of east Seminole County. This provision is currently on appeal.

⁵ *Senate Staff Analysis and Economic Impact Statement for SB 1608*, prepared by the Senate Community Affairs Committee, p. 4 (March 15, 2006).

Municipal Government

The municipal form of government has been recognized in Florida since 1821. Historically, counties have provided state services such as courts, tax collections, sheriff functions, health and welfare services uniformly throughout the county, while municipalities are created to perform additional functions and provide additional services for the particular benefit of the population within the municipality. Currently, there are 408 municipalities in Florida.

Article VIII, section 2 of the State Constitution provides that “[m]unicipalities may be established or abolished and their charters amended pursuant to general or special law.” Municipal home rule powers are provided in that section as follows:

Municipalities shall have governmental, corporate and proprietary powers to enable them to conduct municipal government, perform municipal functions and render municipal services, and may exercise any power for municipal purposes except as otherwise provided by law. Each municipal legislative body shall be elective.

In general, a municipality may exercise any power for municipal purposes except as otherwise provided by general or special law. In 1972, the Legislature enacted ch. 166, F.S., granting municipalities broad governmental, corporate, and proprietary powers necessary to enable municipalities to independently function and provide services to residents.

Growth Management and Land Use Generally⁶

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act of 1985 (“Act”), ss. 163.3161-163.3246, F.S., establishes a growth management system in Florida which requires each local government (or combination of local governments) to adopt a comprehensive land use plan that includes certain required elements, such as: a future land use plan; capital improvements element; and an intergovernmental coordination element. The local government comprehensive plan is intended to be the policy document guiding local governments in their land use decision-making. Under the Act, the Department of Community Affairs adopted by rule minimum criteria for the review and determination of compliance of the local government comprehensive plan elements with the requirements of the Act. Such minimum criteria require that the elements of the plan are consistent with each other and with the state comprehensive plan and the regional policy plan; that the elements include policies to guide future decisions and programs to ensure the plans would be implemented; that the elements include processes for intergovernmental coordination; and that the elements identify procedures for evaluating the implementation of the plan.

Annexation⁷

Section (2)(c), Art. VIII of the State Constitution, provides authority for the Legislature to establish annexation procedures for all counties except Miami-Dade. Annexation can occur using several methods: special act, charter, interlocal agreement, voluntary annexation, or involuntary annexation. Annexation through a special act must meet the notice and referendum requirements of section 10, Art. III of the State Constitution, which are applicable to all special acts.

The “Municipal Annexation or Contraction Act” in ch. 171, F.S., codifies the State’s annexation procedures and was enacted in 1974 to ensure sound urban development, establish uniform methods for the adjustment of municipal boundaries, provide for efficient service delivery in areas that become urban, and limit annexation to areas where municipal services can be provided.⁸ At the time ch. 171, F.S., was created, the prevailing policy focused on the strength of county governments and regional planning agencies. Consequently, Florida’s annexation statutes concentrate on the expansion and contraction of municipal boundaries.⁹

⁶ *Id.* at p. 1.

⁷ *Id.* at p. 2 (With modifications.)

⁸ s. 171.021, F.S.

⁹ See Lance deHaven-Smith, Ph.D., FCCMA Policy Statement on Annexation, Oct. 12, 2002, at 16-17, http://www.fcma.org/pdf/FCCMA_Paper_Final_Draft.pdf.

Current annexation policy in Florida has given rise to a number of issues: difficulty in planning to meet future service needs, confusion over logical service areas and maintenance of infrastructure, duplication of essential services, and zoning efforts thwarted by landowners shopping for the best development climate. While existing annexation procedures may adequately address the concerns of landowners within a proposed annex area, the residents of remaining unincorporated areas or residents of the municipality proposing the annexation may also be significantly affected by the potential loss of revenue or inefficiencies in service delivery.

An area proposed for annexation must be unincorporated, contiguous, and reasonably compact.¹⁰ For a proposed annexation area to be contiguous under ch. 171, F.S., a substantial portion of the annexed area's boundary must be coterminus with the municipality's boundary.¹¹ "Compactness," for purposes of annexation, is defined as the concentration of property in a single area and does not allow for any action that results in an enclave, pocket, or fingers in serpentine patterns.¹²

A newly annexed area comes under the city's jurisdiction on the effective date of the annexation. Following annexation, a municipality must apply the county's land use plan and zoning regulations until a comprehensive plan amendment is adopted that includes the annexed area in the municipalities' Future Land Use Map. It is possible for the city to adopt the comprehensive plan amendment simultaneously with the approval of the annexation. However, there is no requirement that a city amend its comprehensive plan prior to annexation.¹³ In the interim, a city must apply county regulations or wait to apply its own rules.

Cities may annex enclaves of 10 acres or less by interlocal agreement with the county under the provisions of s. 171.046, F.S. An enclave is defined in s. 171.031(13), F.S., as any unincorporated improved or developed area lying within a single municipality or surrounded by a single municipality and a manmade or natural obstacle that permits traffic to enter the unincorporated area only through the municipality. Enclaves of 10 acres or less can also be annexed by municipal ordinance when there are fewer than 25 registered voters living in the enclave and at least 60 percent of those voters approve the annexation in a referendum. In a similar process, s. 163.3171, F.S., allows for a joint planning agreement between a municipality and county to allow annexation of unincorporated areas adjacent to a municipality.

Section 171.044, F.S., provides the procedures for a voluntary annexation which occurs when 100 percent of the landowners in an area petition a municipality. In addition to the annexing municipality enacting an ordinance allowing for the annexation to occur, there are certain notice requirements that must be met. This section does not apply where a county charter provides the exclusive method for voluntary annexation.¹⁴ Also, the voluntary annexation procedures in this section are considered supplemental to any other procedure contained in general or special law.¹⁵

EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES

This bill creates s. 163.3172, F.S., to address the application to municipalities of countywide provisions regarding land use, development or redevelopment of land, and voluntary annexation. This new section provides legislative findings as follows:

- Municipalities are the units of local self-government closest to the people they serve and thereby are best situated to determine the unique needs of their communities;
- Municipalities provide their residents a true voice as to the character and values of their local communities;

¹⁰ ss. 171.0413-171.043, F.S.

¹¹ s. 171.031(11), F.S.

¹² s. 171.031(12), F.S.

¹³ See *1000 Friends of Fla., Inc. v. Florida Dep't of Community Affairs*, 824 So. 2d 989 (Fla. 4th DCA 2002).

¹⁴ s. 171.044(4), F.S.

¹⁵ s. 171.044(4), F.S.

- There have been increasing and numerous preemptions of municipal democratic powers by other forms of local government;
- Municipalities must retain the authority to perform the functions that are of most immediate concern to their citizens.

Existing Charter Counties: An existing charter county *charter provision* governing the use, development, or redevelopment of land, or providing an exclusive method of annexation will not be applicable in or to a municipality within the county unless:

- (1) the city commission approves its application within the city, or
- (2) the voters of the city approve its application within the city.

An existing charter county *ordinance, land development regulation, or county wide special act* governing the use, development, or redevelopment of land, or providing an exclusive method of annexation will not be applicable in or to a municipality within the county unless:

- (1) the city commission approves its application within the city, or
- (2) the voters of the city approve its application within the city, and
- (3) the voters of the county approve the provision.

Future Charter Counties: In charter counties in which the charter is adopted by the voters after the effective date of the bill, every countywide charter provision, ordinance, land development regulation, or county wide special act governing the use, development, or redevelopment of land, or providing an exclusive method of annexation will not apply in or to a city within the county unless:

- (1) the city commission approves its application within the city, or
- (2) the voters of the city approve its application within the city, and
- (3) the voters of the county approve the provision.

Existing Non-Charter Counties: In non-charter counties, every ordinance, land development regulation, or county wide special act governing the use, development, or redevelopment of land does not apply in or to a city within the county unless:

- (1) the city commission approves its application within the city, or
- (2) the voters of the city approve its application within the city, and
- (3) the voters of the county approve the provision.

Specifically, the new section provides that, notwithstanding ch. 163, F.S., ch. 125, F.S., and s. 171.044(4), F.S.:

- Any existing or future charter county charter provision, ordinance, land development regulation, or countywide special act that governs the use, development, or redevelopment of land is not effective within and does not apply to any municipality in the county;
- A charter county charter provision, ordinance, land development regulation, or countywide special act may not provide an exclusive method of municipal annexation unless the provision, ordinance, regulation, or special act is approved by a majority vote of the electors within the county and a majority vote of the electors within the municipality at a duly held municipal election or is approved by a majority vote of the municipality's governing board; and
- Existing charter county charter provisions and countywide special acts that have been approved by referendum prior to the effective date of the bill must be readopted in accordance with this section.

By “notwithstanding” chs. 163 and 125, and s. 171.044(4), F.S., the bill is, in effect, a “preemption” of those general laws previously enacted by the Legislature. Therefore, any provision in those statutes that authorize or provide for countywide application of county ordinances or regulations governing the

use, development, or redevelopment of land are no longer applicable. The full impact of “notwithstanding” these general laws is unknown due to the broad range of subjects potentially covered by these provisions. For example, ch. 163, F.S., broadly governs intergovernmental programs, including:

- Miscellaneous Programs, such as the Florida Interlocal Cooperation Act of 1969;
- Growth Policy and County and Municipal Planning;
- Land Development Regulation;
- Community Redevelopment;
- Neighborhood Improvement Districts; and
- Regional Transportation Authorities.

Chapter 125, F.S., sets forth the broad Legislative grant of home rule powers to charter and non-charter counties and generally relates to county governance, including provisions regarding:

- Powers and Duties of County Commissioners;
- Self-Government of Counties, which grants general and specific powers to non-charter and charter counties;
- County Administration; and
- Optional County Charters.

Chapter 171, F.S., is known as the "Municipal Annexation or Contraction Act." The purposes of the act are to provide procedures for adjusting the boundaries of municipalities through annexations or contractions of corporate limits and to set forth criteria for determining when annexations or contractions may take place. Section 171.044, F.S., establishes a method of “voluntary annexation” whereby “[t]he owner or owners of real property in an unincorporated area of a county which is contiguous to a municipality and reasonably compact may petition the governing body of said municipality that said property be annexed to the municipality.” Section 171.044(4), F.S., provides that “[t]he method of annexation provided by this section shall be supplemental to any other procedure provided by general or special law, except that this section shall not apply to municipalities in counties *with charters which provide for an exclusive method of municipal annexation.*” This bill essentially preempts subsection (4) so that any existing or future county charter provision that provides an exclusive method of voluntary annexation must be approved by the city commission or the qualified electors of a city prior to application of the provision to the city.

The bill explicitly exempts from its provisions any county as defined in s. 125.011, F.S., which only includes Miami-Dade County.¹⁶

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates s. 163.3172, F.S., limiting application of countywide provisions governing land use, development and redevelopment of land, and voluntary annexation to cities with counties.

Section 2. Providing an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues: None.

¹⁶ The term “county” is defined in s. 125.011, F.S., as “any county operating under a home rule charter adopted pursuant to ss. 10, 11, and 24, Art. VIII of the Constitution of 1885, as preserved by Art. VIII, s. 6(e) of the Constitution of 1968, which county, by resolution of its board of county commissioners, elects to exercise the powers herein conferred. Use of the word “county” within the above provisions shall include “board of county commissioners” of such county.”

2. Expenditures: None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues: This bill does not have a direct impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures: Please see Mandates Analysis below.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR: All countywide provisions governing land use, redevelopment and development of land, are no longer applicable within boundaries of a municipality unless the city commission or the voters of the city approve. Cities may enact ordinances governing land use, regardless of a countywide ordinance, as long as the city complies with state land use requirements. This may result in less stringent permitting and land use regulations within some cities, benefiting private entities wishing to development land in these areas. On the other hand, cities would be authorized to enact more stringent ordinances than those that currently apply on a countywide basis.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS: None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision: This bill would require a county to amend or repeal a charter, ordinance, or land development regulation that preempts municipalities within the county with regard to land use, development, or redevelopment, or that provides an exclusive method for annexation unless the preemption is approved by the municipality. This may be a Type A mandate because the provision requires counties to expend funds and is subject to analysis under Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution. There are several exemptions and exceptions in Article VII, Section 18.

One of the exemptions under Article VII, Section 18 covers a bill that has an insignificant fiscal impact. Although the fiscal impact has not been determined, this bill may require an expenditure of funds that exceeds \$1.9 million. This bill does not appear to meet any other exemption or one of the exceptions. Therefore, the Legislature must find an important state interest and the bill must pass by a two-thirds vote of each house to effectively bind the counties.

2. Other: Article VIII, s. 1(g) of the State Constitution grants charter counties the power to determine, in the county charter, which ordinances prevail in the event of conflict between county and municipal ordinances.¹⁷ This constitutional provision permits regulatory preemption by counties of municipal regulatory power if countywide uniformity will best further the ends of government.¹⁸ However, in addition to granting charter counties the express power to provide, by charter, that county ordinances prevail in the event of a conflict with municipal ordinances, the constitution also provides that charter counties have all powers of self-government “not inconsistent with general law”.¹⁹ The question is this: Is the Legislature authorized to establish a process by general law to determine which ordinances prevail in the event of a conflict between charter county and municipal ordinances, or does the constitution grant that power exclusively to charter counties?

¹⁷ “The charter shall provide which shall prevail in the event of conflict between county and municipal ordinances.” Art. VIII, s. 1(g), Fla. Const.

¹⁸ *Broward County v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 480 So.2d 631 (Fla. 1985).

¹⁹ “Counties operating under county charters shall have all powers of local self-government not inconsistent with general law...” Art. VIII, s. 1(g), Fla. Const.

The interrelationship between the express constitutional grant of power to charter counties to determine which ordinances prevail, and the Legislature's authority to limit the powers of charter counties by general law has not been directly addressed by the Florida courts. The fact that the Legislature is authorized to limit municipal and charter county home rule authority by general law is undisputed and well-settled in case law; however, the Florida courts have not addressed the question of whether the Legislature may limit a charter county's direct grant of constitutional authority to determine whether county ordinances prevail over municipal ordinances. Therefore, the constitutionality of a general law preemption of charter county authority to determine whether county ordinances prevail over municipal ordinances is uncertain until directly addressed by the courts.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY: Not applicable.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS: The provisions of this bill are retroactive. A county that has a charter, ordinance, or land development regulation that currently preempts municipalities within the county with regard to land use, development or redevelopment of land, or that provides an exclusive method for annexation, must be repealed or amended unless it is approved by a municipality as provided for in this bill.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES

N/A