

The Florida Senate
PROFESSIONAL STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee

BILL: SB 886

INTRODUCER: Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee

SUBJECT: Open Government Sunset Review/Building Plans/Agency

DATE: March 2, 2007

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Pardue	Skelton	MS	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	GO	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill reenacts the public records exemption provisions for building plans. The bill provides for the exemption of building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams which depict the internal layout and structural elements of a building, arena, stadium, water treatment facility or other structure owned or operated by an agency as defined in s. 119.011, F.S. The exemption applies to draft, preliminary, and final formats of such plans. The bill deletes the provisions that repeal the exemption.

The bill does not have any apparent fiscal impact.

This bill reenacts and amends s. 119.071(3)(b), F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records

Florida has a long history of providing public access to the records and meetings of governmental and other public entities. The Florida Legislature enacted the first law affording access to public records in 1909. In 1992, Floridians voted to adopt an amendment to the Florida Constitution that raised the statutory right of public access to public records to a constitutional level.

The Public Records Law, ch. 119, F.S., specifies the conditions under which public access must be provided to governmental records. Section 286.011, F.S., the Public Meetings Law, specifies the requirements for meetings of public bodies to be open to the public. While the State

Constitution provides that records and meetings are to be open to the public, it also provides that the Legislature may create exemptions to these requirements by general law if a public need exists and certain procedural requirements are met. Article I, s. 24, of the Florida Constitution, governs the creation and expansion of exemptions to provide, in effect, that any legislation that creates a new exemption or that substantially amends an existing exemption must also contain a statement of the public necessity that justifies the exemption. Article I, s. 24, of the Florida Constitution, provides that any bill that contains an exemption may not contain other substantive provisions, although it may contain multiple exemptions.

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (s. 119.15, F.S.), provides for the repeal and prior review of any public records or meetings exemptions that are created or substantially amended in 1996 and subsequently. The chapter defines the term “substantial amendment” for purposes of triggering a repeal and prior review of an exemption to include an amendment that expands the scope of the exemption to include more records or information or to include meetings as well as records. The law clarifies that an exemption is not substantially amended if an amendment limits or narrows the scope of an existing exemption. The law was amended by ch. 2005-251, Laws of Florida, to modify the criteria under the Open Government Sunset Review Act so that consideration will be given to reducing the number of exemptions by creating a uniform exemption during the review of an exemption subject to sunset.

Under the Open Government Sunset Review Act, an exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. An identifiable public purpose is served if the exemption:

- Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, the administration of which would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
- Protects information of a sensitive personal nature concerning individuals, the release of which information would be defamatory to such individuals or cause unwarranted damage to the good name or reputation of such individuals or would jeopardize the safety of such individuals; or
- Protects information of a confidential nature concerning entities, including, but not limited to, a formula, pattern, device, combination of devices, or compilation of information which is used to protect or further a business advantage over those who do not know or use it, the disclosure of which information would injure the affected entity in the marketplace.

Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S., requires, as part of the review process, the consideration of the following questions:

- What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
- Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
- What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
- Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means? If so, how?
- Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?

- Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

Further, the exemption must be no broader than is necessary to meet the public purpose it serves. In addition, the Legislature must find that the purpose is sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government and cannot be accomplished without the exemption.

Under s. 119.15(8), F.S., notwithstanding s. 768.28, F.S., or any other law, neither the state or its political subdivisions nor any other public body shall be made party to any suit in any court or incur any liability for the repeal or revival and reenactment of an exemption under the section. The failure of the Legislature to comply strictly with the section does not invalidate an otherwise valid reenactment. Further, one session of the Legislature may not bind a future Legislature. As a result, a new session of the Legislature could maintain an exemption that does not meet the standards set forth in the Open Government Sunset Review Act of 1995.

2002 Legislative Findings

In creating s. 119.071(3)(b), F.S., the Legislature found the public necessity to exempt building plans in order to ensure the safety of government infrastructures and to ensure public safety.¹ The finding further stated that such exempt building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams are a vital component of public safety and if made publicly available, the ability of persons who desire to harm individuals located in or using those structures would be increased.

2007 Open Government Sunset Review

The Senate Military Affairs and Domestic Security Committee, in its review of Senate Interim Project Report 2007-208, accepted the staff recommendation that the exemption provided for building plans continues to be sufficiently compelling to override the strong public policy of open government.

International terrorists continue to demonstrate the ability to plan and carry out sophisticated acts of terrorism. Their capability appears to be no less today than at the time of the Legislature's original findings in 2002. Further, there has been no evidence of any abatement of known terrorists' motivation to cause harm to the United States.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill provides for the reenactment of s. 119.071(3)(b), F.S. and the deletion of provisions that repeal the exemption.

Section 119.071(3)(b), F.S., provides for a public records exemption for building plans and other related documents. Specifically, this bill provides for the exemption of building plans, blueprints, schematic drawings, and diagrams which depict the internal layout and structural elements of a building, arena, stadium, water treatment facility or other structure owned or operated by an

¹ Chapter 2002-67, Laws of Florida.

agency as defined in s. 119.011, F.S. The exemption applies to draft, preliminary, and final formats of such plans.

This bill provides an effective date of October 1, 2007.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

Article I, s. 24 of the State Constitution, permits the Legislature to provide by general law for the exemption of open meetings and for the exemption of records. A law that exempts a record must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption and the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.² This requirement was met by Chapter 2002-67, L.O.F.

Additionally, a bill that contains an exemption may not contain other substantive provisions, although it may contain multiple exemptions that relate to one subject.³ This bill is in compliance with the provision.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

² See, *Memorial Hospital-West Volusia v. News-Journal Corporation*, 729 So.2d 373, 380 (Fla. 1999); *Halifax Hospital Medical Center v. News-Journal Corporation*, 724 So.2d 567 (Fla. 1999)

³ Art. I, s.24(c) of the State Constitution

VII. Related Issues:

As part of the review process, committee staff contacted the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida League of Cities, and the First Amendment Foundation. The Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities recommended reenactment. The First Amendment Foundation did not object to reenactment in present form.

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

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

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