

ETHICS

CS/CS/HB 181 — Ethics/Financial Disclosure

by Governmental Operations Committee; Rules and Calendar Committee; Rep. Arnall and others (CS/CS/SB 368 by Ethics & Elections Committee; Fiscal Policy Committee; and Senators Saunders, Rossin, Hargrett, Sebesta, and Kirkpatrick)

This bill contains improvements to Florida’s Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees, particularly in the area of financial disclosure, and amends related sections of law. It embodies some of the recommendations of the Governor’s Public Corruption Task Force. Specific provisions of the bill include:

- Requiring a former officer or employee to file a *final* financial disclosure statement for the portion of the last year during which the person is in government service, within 60 days of his or her departure date.
- Setting up an automatic fine system for persons failing to timely file their annual financial disclosure, with fines of \$25/day for each day late up to a maximum automatic fine of \$1,500.
- Reducing the number of persons required to file limited disclosure by defining the specific type of board whose members must file. This should reduce the number of minor board members required to file.
- Changing the laws governing the valuation of gifts to establish a 90-day period during which a reporting individual may reimburse a donor for all or a part of a gift’s value.
- Extending the provisions of the gifts law to cover successful, former candidates who are not otherwise reporting individuals during the period immediately following the election but prior to officially assuming the responsibilities of the office.
- Moving administration of financial, gifts, and honoraria disclosure from the Department of State to the Ethics Commission.
- Clarifying the reporting of joint assets and joint and several liabilities.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect January 1, 2001.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 116-0

ELECTIONS

CS/HB 917 — Elections

by Election Reform Committee, Rep. Stafford and others (CS/SB 270 by Ethics & Elections Committee and Senator Sebesta)

This bill amends various provisions of the Election Code to provide more flexibility for the supervisors of elections. If provided by the supervisor, the bill allows an alternative method for voting an absentee ballot in the office of the supervisor of elections. Instead of inserting the absentee ballot into an absentee ballot envelope, those voters voting in the supervisor's office will deposit the voted ballot into a device for collecting or tabulating ballots. This procedure is similar to the procedure used at the polling place on election day. The bill allows the supervisor of elections to determine the number of election workers needed at each polling place and allows the supervisors more flexibility in the training of these election workers.

The bill also makes several changes to the municipal recall provisions of the Election Code. The changes will allow anyone to witness a signature, rather than a circulator who is associated with the recall effort. This provision will allow municipal recall petitions to be circulated through the mail rather than in person. The bill also removes the discretion of the city clerk to determine that the recall petition is facially valid.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2000.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 117-0

HB 1013 — Voter Registration

by Election Reform Committee (CS/SB 334 by Ethics & Elections Committee and Senator Saunders)

This bill addresses some administrative problems encountered by Florida's supervisors of elections in implementing the Voter Fraud Act, ch. 1998-129, L.O.F., in the area of voter registration. Specifically, the bill deletes a requirement that voter registration cards be mailed to the voter's legal residence address and instead allows them to be mailed to the voter's mailing address. It also removes a requirement that certain registered voters registering to vote by mail must cast an in-person ballot if they are voting in the county for the first time.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2000.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 116-0

CS/CS/SB 890 — Direct-Support Organizations

by Ethics & Elections Committee; Education Committee; and Senator Kurth

This bill prohibits the direct support organization (“DSO”) of a state university, community college, or the statewide community college system from contributing to a political committee or committee of continuous existence, unless the governing board, by majority roll call vote, deems the contribution to be “directly related to the educational mission” of the respective educational institution supported by the DSO.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2000.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 115-0

HB 295 — Resign to Run

by Rep. Brummer (SB 1502 by Senator Casas)

This bill eliminates the requirement that a subordinate officer, deputy sheriff, or police officer must take an unpaid leave of absence if he or she is seeking a public office and is not required to resign upon qualifying as required by the resign-to-run law. Under the provisions of this bill, the resign-to-run law will not apply to a subordinate officer, deputy sheriff or police officer unless such officer is running against his or her boss and that boss has qualified for reelection.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 108-1

