

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

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

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Finance and Tax

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BILL: SB 144

INTRODUCER: Senator Gruters

SUBJECT: Impact Fees

DATE: March 20, 2019

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Toman</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>CA</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Babin</u>	<u>Diez-Arguelles</u>	<u>FT</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
3.	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>                    </u>

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**I. Summary:**

SB 144 prohibits local governments from requiring the payment of impact fees prior to issuing the property's building permit. The bill also codifies the 'dual rational nexus test' for impact fees, as articulated in case law. This test requires an impact fee to have a reasonable connection, or rational nexus, between 1) the proposed new development and the need and the impact of additional capital facilities, and 2) the expenditure of funds and the benefits accrued to the proposed new development.

Additional conditions of the bill include earmarking impact fee funds for capital facilities that benefit new residents and prohibiting the use of impact fee revenues to pay existing debt unless specific conditions are met. The bill provides that certain statutory provisions related to impact fees do not apply to water and sewer connection fees.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

The Revenue Estimating Conference has determined that the bill will reduce local impact fees by an indeterminate amount in Fiscal Year 2019-2020, with a positive or negative indeterminate, recurring fiscal impact.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Local Government Authority**

The Florida Constitution grants local governments broad home rule authority. Specifically, non-charter county governments may exercise those powers of self-government that are provided by general or special law.<sup>1</sup> Those counties operating under a county charter have all powers of local self-government not inconsistent with general law or special law approved by the vote of the

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VIII, s. 1(f).

electors.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, municipalities have those governmental, corporate, and proprietary powers that enable them to conduct municipal government, perform their functions and provide services, and exercise any power for municipal purposes, except as otherwise provided by law.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike counties or municipalities, independent special districts do not possess home rule power. Therefore, the powers possessed by independent special districts are those expressly provided by, or which can be reasonably implied from, the special district's charter or general law.<sup>4</sup>

### **Local Government Revenue Sources Based on Home Rule Authority<sup>5</sup>**

Pursuant to home rule authority, counties and municipalities may impose proprietary fees,<sup>6</sup> regulatory fees, and special assessments<sup>7</sup> to pay the cost of providing a facility or service or regulating an activity.

Regulatory fees are home rule revenue sources that may be imposed pursuant to a local government's police powers in the exercise of a sovereign function. Examples of regulatory fees include building permit fees, impact fees, inspection fees, and storm water fees. Two principles guide the application and use of regulatory fees: 1) the fee should not exceed the regulated activity's cost, and 2) the fee is generally required to be applied solely to the regulated activity's cost for which the fee is imposed.

Special districts do not possess home rule powers; therefore, special districts may impose only those taxes, assessments, or fees authorized by special or general law.<sup>8</sup>

### **Impact Fees**

As one type of regulatory fee, impact fees are charges imposed by local governments against new development to provide for capital facilities' costs made necessary by such growth.<sup>9</sup> Examples of capital facilities include the provision of additional water and sewer systems, schools,<sup>10</sup> libraries, parks and recreational facilities. Impact fee calculations vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and from fee to fee. Impact fees also vary extensively depending on local costs, capacity needs, resources, and the local government's determination to charge the

<sup>2</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VIII, s. 1(g).

<sup>3</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VIII, s. 2(b). *See also* s. 166.021(1), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *See* s. 189.031(3)(b), F.S. *See also State ex rel. City of Gainesville v. St. Johns River Water Mgmt. Dist.*, 408 So.2d 1067, 1068 (Fla. 1<sup>st</sup> DCA 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Office of Economic and Demographic Research, The Florida Legislature, *2018 Local Government Financial Handbook*, 9-13, available at <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/local-government/reports/lgh18.pdf> (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Examples of proprietary fees include admissions fees, franchise fees, user fees, and utility fees. *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Special assessments are typically used to construct and maintain capital facilities or to fund certain services. *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *See* ch. 189, F.S. *See also* State Affairs Committee and Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, The Florida House of Representatives, *The Local Government Formation Manual 2018-2020*, 70, available at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Committees/committeesdetail.aspx?CommitteeId=3025> (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> *See supra* note 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* With respect to a school impact fee, the fee is imposed by the respective board of county commissioners at the request of the school board. The fee amount is usually determined after a study of the actual impact/costs of new residential construction on the school district has been made.

full cost or only part of the cost of the infrastructure improvement through utilization of the impact fee.

In local Fiscal Year 2016-2017, the most recent year for which the Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR) has impact fee data, 35 counties reported impact fee revenues totaling \$629.1 million, 194 cities reported impact fee revenues of \$279.7 million, and 28 school districts reported impact fee revenues of \$329.7 million.<sup>11</sup>

### **Florida Impact Fee Act**

In response to local governments' reliance on impact fees and the growth of impact fee collections, the Legislature adopted the Florida Impact Fee Act (Act) in 2006, which requires local governing authorities to satisfy certain requirements when imposing impact fees.<sup>12</sup> The Act was amended in 2009 to require local government to prove by a preponderance of evidence that the imposition or amount of its impact fee meets the requirements of law during any action challenging the impact fee; the judiciary is prohibited from giving deference to the local government.<sup>13</sup>

Section 163.31801(3), F.S., provides requirements and procedures for the adoption of an impact fee. An impact fee adopted by ordinance of a county or municipality or by resolution of a special district must, at minimum:

- Require that the calculation of the impact fee be based on the most recent and localized data;
- Provide for accounting and reporting of impact fee collections and expenditures. If a local government imposes an impact fee to address its infrastructure needs, the entity must account for the revenues and expenditures of such impact fee in a separate accounting fund;
- Limit administrative charges for the collection of impact fees to actual costs; and
- Require that notice be provided at least 90 days before the effective date of an ordinance or resolution imposing a new or increased impact fee.

### **Dual Rational Nexus Test**

While s. 163.31801, F.S., outlines many characteristics and limitations of impact fees, case law serves an integral role in the impact fee process in Florida. As developed under case law, an impact fee imposed by a local government should meet the 'dual rational nexus test' in order to withstand legal challenge.<sup>14</sup> A number of court decisions have addressed the dual rational nexus test and challenges to the legality of impact fees.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Office of Economic and Demographic Research, The Florida Legislature, *Impact Fees*, available at <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/local-government/data/data-a-to-z/g-l.cfm> (last visited Mar.17, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Section 163.31801, F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter 2009-49, L.O.F.

<sup>14</sup> See *St. Johns County vs. Northeast Florida Builders Ass'n, Inc.*, 583 So.2d 635, 637 (Fla. 1991) (discussing *Hollywood, Inc. v. Broward County*, 431 So.2d 606, 611-12 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA), *review denied*, 440 So. 2d 352 (Fla. 1983) while applying the dual rational nexus test to impact fees for schools).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., *Contractors & Builders Ass'n of Pinellas County v. City of Dunedin*, 329 So.2d 314 (Fla. 1976); *Home Builders and Contractors' Association v. Board of County Commissioners of Palm Beach County*, 446 So.2d 140 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 1983).

In *Hollywood, Inc. v. Broward County*,<sup>16</sup> the Fourth District Court of Appeal addressed the validity of a county ordinance that required a developer, as a condition of plat approval, to dedicate land or pay a fee for the expansion of the county level park system to accommodate the new residents of the proposed development. The court found that a reasonable dedication or impact fee requirement is permissible if (1) it offsets reasonable needs that are sufficiently attributable to the new development and (2) the fees collected are adequately earmarked for the acquisition of capital assets that will benefit the residents of the new development.<sup>17</sup> In order to show the impact fee meets those requirements, the local government must demonstrate a rational relationship between the need for additional capital facilities and the proposed development. In addition, the local government must show the funds are earmarked for the provision of public facilities to benefit the new residents.<sup>18</sup>

In *Volusia County v. Aberdeen at Ormond Beach*, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that when a residential development has no potential to increase school enrollment, public school impact fees may not be imposed.<sup>19</sup> The county in that case had imposed a school impact fee on a deed-restricted community for adults 55 years old and older. In *City of Zephyrhills v. Wood*, the Second District Court of Appeal upheld an impact fee on a recently purchased and renovated building, finding that structural changes had corresponding impacts on the city's water and sewer system.<sup>20</sup>

As developed under case law, an impact fee must have the following characteristics to be legal:

- The fee is levied on new development, the expansion of existing development, or a change in land use that requires additional capacity for public facilities;
- The fee represents a proportionate share of the cost of public facilities needed to serve new development;
- The fee is earmarked and expended for the benefit of those in the new development who have paid the fee;
- The fee is a one-time charge, although collection may be spread over a period of time;
- The fee is earmarked for capital outlay only and is not expended for operating costs; and
- The fee-payers receive credit for the contributions toward the cost of the increased capacity for public facilities.<sup>21</sup>

### **Timing of Collection for Impact Fees**

Florida Statutes do not specify when a local government must collect impact fees. As a result, the applicable local government makes this decision, and the time of collection varies.<sup>22</sup> For

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<sup>16</sup> *Hollywood, Inc. v. Broward County*, 431 So.2d 606 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 1983).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 611.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 611-12.

<sup>19</sup> *Volusia County v. Aberdeen at Ormond Beach*, 760 So.2d 126, 134 (Fla. 2000).

<sup>20</sup> *City of Zephyrhills v. Wood*, 831 So.2d 223, 225 (Fla. 2<sup>nd</sup> DCA 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Committee on Community Affairs, The Florida Senate, *Impact Fees*, 4 (Issue Brief 2010-310) (Sept. 2009), available at [http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2010/Senate/reports/interim\\_reports/pdf/2010-310ca.pdf](http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2010/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2010-310ca.pdf) (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Common benchmark development actions include plat approval, building permitting, and certificate of occupancy. A 2015 national impact fee study by Duncan Associates entitled *State Impact Fee Enabling Acts* identified 29 states with impact fee enabling acts. The study found that “about one-third of enabling acts allow impact fees to be collected at any time during the

example, in Orange County, residential impact fees are due when the building permit is issued, although the county allows the fees to be deferred in certain circumstances.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, in Volusia County, impact fees are due before the issuance of a certificate of occupancy or business tax receipt.<sup>24</sup>

### **Water and Sewer Connection Fees**

Counties and municipalities may construct or acquire and operate water supply and wastewater disposal systems and may charge reasonable fees for the connection to and use of such systems.<sup>25</sup> Connection fees are charges imposed by the operator of a water supply or wastewater disposal system to defray the costs incurred for allowing additional users to tie into the system and may be considered a type of impact fee.<sup>26</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The bill amends s. 163.31801, F.S., to prohibit local governments from requiring the collection of an impact fee prior to the issuance of the building permit for the property that is subject to the fee.

The bill also codifies the dual rational nexus test. Specifically, the bill requires that an impact fee be reasonably connected to, or have a rational nexus with:

- The need for additional capital facilities and the increased impact generated by the new residential or commercial construction; and
- The expenditures of the funds collected and the benefits accruing to the new residential or commercial construction.

The local government also must specifically earmark funds collected pursuant to the impact fees for use in acquiring, constructing, or improving capital facilities to benefit the new users. In addition, the bill prohibits the use of impact fee revenues to pay existing debt or for prior approved projects unless the expenditure is reasonably connected to, or has a rational nexus with, the increased impact generated by the new residential or commercial construction.

Lastly, the bill provides that water and sewer connection fees are excluded from the statutory provisions related to impact fees contained in s. 163.31801, F.S.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

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development process. Most of the others provide that impact fees cannot be collected prior to the building permit or certificate of occupancy.” See [http://impactfees.com/publications%20pdf/state\\_enabling\\_acts.pdf](http://impactfees.com/publications%20pdf/state_enabling_acts.pdf) (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Orange County Government, Florida, *Residential Impact Fees*, available at <http://www.orangecountyfl.net/PermitsLicenses/Permits/ResidentialImpactFees.aspx#.WgnLs0kUmUl>. (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Volusia County, Florida, *Frequently Asked Questions on Impact Fees*, available at <https://www.volusia.org/services/growth-and-resource-management/impact-fees/faqs-impact-fees.stml> (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Section 153.03(3), F.S. authorizes counties to “fix and collect” fees for service, including connection fees. Section 180.13, F.S., authorizes municipalities to establish “just and equitable” service rates or charges for utilities.

<sup>26</sup> See *City of Zephyrhills v. Wood*, 831 So.2d 223 (Fla. 2<sup>nd</sup> DCA 2002); *Hernando County Water and Sewer District v. Hernando Board of Public Instruction*, 610 So.2d 6 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 1992).

#### IV. Constitutional Issues:

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Article VII, Section 18(b) of the Florida Constitution provides that the Legislature, except upon approval by a two-thirds vote, may not enact a general law if the anticipated effect of doing so would be to reduce the *authority* that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate. However, the mandate requirements do not apply to laws having an insignificant fiscal impact, which for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 is forecast at slightly over \$2 million.<sup>27,28,29</sup>

In 1991, Senate President Margolis and House Speaker Wetherell created a memo to guide the House and Senate in the review of local government mandates.<sup>30</sup> In the memo, the guidelines define the term “authority” to mean the power to levy a tax; the vote required to levy the tax, e.g., increasing the required vote from majority to majority plus one; the tax rate which can be levied; and the base against which the tax is levied, e.g., a bill providing a sales tax exemption should be considered a reduction in authority because counties have authority to levy local option sales taxes against the state sales tax base.

While SB 144 does not restrict the amount of an impact fee, the mandates provision of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution may apply because the bill restricts the time at which a county or municipality may collect its impact fees. An impact fee collected at the platting stage is theoretically worth more than an impact fee collected at the building permit stage due to the time value of money.<sup>31</sup> It is unclear if this bill lessens the type of *authority* contemplated by President Margolis and Speaker Wetherell.

If the bill is determined to reduce the *authority* that counties and municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate and exceeds the threshold for insignificant fiscal impact, the bill may qualify as a mandate and require final passage by a two-thirds vote of the membership of each house of the Legislature.

##### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

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<sup>27</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 18(d).

<sup>28</sup> An insignificant fiscal impact is the amount not greater than the average statewide population for the applicable fiscal year times \$0.10. See Florida Senate Committee on Community Affairs, *Interim Report 2012-115: Insignificant Impact*, (Sept. 2011), available at <http://www.flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/Session/2012/InterimReports/2012-115sca.pdf> (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Based on the Florida Demographic Estimating Conference’s February 6, 2019, population forecast for 2019 of 21,184,532. The conference packet is available at <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/conferences/population/ConferenceResults.pdf> (last visited Mar. 17, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum to Members of The Florida House and The Florida Senate from Gwen Margolis, President of the Senate and T.K. Wetherell, Speaker of the House, *County and Municipal Mandates Analysis*, (March 7, 1991) (on file with the Senate Committee on Finance and Tax).

<sup>31</sup> Provided money can earn interest, any amount of money is worth more the sooner it is received.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

The Revenue Estimating Conference determined that the bill will reduce local impact fee revenues by an indeterminate amount in Fiscal Year 2019-2020, with a positive or negative indeterminate, recurring fiscal impact.<sup>32</sup>

B. Private Sector Impact:

Developers will not have to pay impact fees prior to the issuance of the building permit for a property.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Counties, municipalities, and special districts will not be able to collect impact fees prior to the issuance of the building permit for a property.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 163.31801 of the Florida Statutes.

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<sup>32</sup> Office of Economic and Demographic Research, The Florida Legislature, *Local Taxes and Fees, SB 144/HB 107*, 29-34 (Jan. 24, 2019), available at [http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2019/\\_pdf/page29-34.pdf](http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2019/_pdf/page29-34.pdf) (last visited Mar. 18, 2019).

**IX. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.

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

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