

## Committee on Ethics and Elections

### CS/SB 348 — Ethics

by Ethics and Elections Committee and Senators Gaetz, Collins, and Avila

The bill adds to the Code of Ethics a “stolen valor” provision prohibiting candidates, public officers, and public employees from knowingly making certain fraudulent representations relating to military service for the purpose of material gain, including:

- Representing that he or she is or was a servicemember or veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States, actively served during a wartime era, served in combat, or was a prisoner of war.
- Representing that he or she was a recipient of a decoration, medal, title, or honor from the Armed Forces of the United States or that is otherwise related to military service.
- Representing that he or she is a holder of an awarded qualification or military occupational specialty.
- Wearing the uniform or any medal or insignia authorized for use by members or veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States which he or she is not authorized to wear.

The bill also expands the existing authority to seek wage garnishment for unpaid fines stemming from judgments of ethics complaints by:

- Allowing for withholding the lesser of 25 percent or the maximum allowable under federal law, including an amount to cover the administrative cost of withholding the payment, from any salary-related payment until the fine is satisfied.
- Allowing for referral of any unpaid penalty to a collection agency.
- Allowing actions to collect an unpaid penalty within 20 years after the date the penalty is imposed.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

*Vote: Senate 39-0; House 114-0*

## Committee on Ethics and Elections

### **CS/HB 1205 — Amendments to the State Constitution**

by State Affairs Committee and Rep. Persons-Mulicka and others (CS/SB 7016 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Ethics and Elections Committee; and Senators Gaetz and Grall)

Chapter 2025-21, L.O.F. makes the following changes to Florida's citizens' initiative process:

- Limits the number of general election cycles a petition can remain active without achieving at least 25% of the signatures required to appear on the ballot to three.
- Limits sponsorship of initiative petitions to one per political committee.
- Requires sponsors and circulators to submit completed petition forms within 10 days.
- Revises the elements required on the petition forms to include additional details about the proposed amendment and the voter signing the petition.
- Requires a person who collects more than 25 signed petition forms, not counting his or her own or those of immediate family members, to register as a petition circulator.
- Prohibits noncitizens, non-Florida residents, and felons who have not had their right to vote restored from registering as petition circulators.
- Requires additional personal identifying information for applicants for petition circulator.
- Requires training for petition circulators.
- Authorizes the Division of Elections to revoke a circulator's registration upon written request of the sponsor or for violation of regulations.
- Increases penalties or creates new ones related to late submission or nonsubmission of completed petition forms, knowingly allowing an ineligible person to collect petition forms, filling in missing information on a submitted form, copying or retaining a voter's personal information, and prefilling voter information on petition forms.
- Specifies that a petition sponsor is not liable for a fine if it discovers and reports a violation.
- Revises the existing prohibition against compensating a petition circulator on a per-signature basis.
- Adds a violation of the Election Code relating to irregularities or fraud involving issue petition activities to the list of racketeering offenses.
- Requires supervisors of elections to notify voters whose signatures are verified and to provide an opportunity for such persons to report that their signatures were forged or misrepresented.
- Revises provisions governing petition form retention, petition form transmittal requirements, and the costs supervisors may charge for signature verification.
- Requires the Office of Election Crimes and Security to investigate the activities of the sponsor, circulator, and anyone collecting petitions on the sponsor's behalf if the percentage of invalid signatures in any given county during a reporting period exceeds 25%.
- Requires that completed petition forms collected by ineligible or unregistered circulators be invalidated.

Regarding the Financial Impact Estimating Conference (FIEC) and financial impact statements, the bill:

- Clarifies that appointees to the FIEC are to be professional staff from all appointing authorities, and that the FIEC may only be convened by the Senate President and House Speaker.
- Provides for inclusion of the financial impact statement on the petition form.
- Adds the financial impact statement to the issues subject to automatic Supreme Court review.

The bill also:

- Clarifies processes for certification of and challenge to constitutional amendments.
- Prohibits the use of public funds to advocate for or against any issue that is the subject of a proposed constitutional amendment.
- Prescribes timelines for implementation.

Except as otherwise specified in the act, these provisions became law upon approval by the Governor on May 2, 2025.

*Vote: Senate 28-9; House 81-30*