

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/HB 1161 — Venomous Reptiles

By Infrastructure Strategies Committee and Rep. Abbott and others (CS/SB 1266 by Criminal Justice Committee and Senators Rodriguez and Stewart)

The bill revises violations and penalties for the improper sale, release, and escape of certain reptiles. The bill provides that a person commits a Level Four violation if they:

- Knowingly release a nonnative venomous reptile or allow a nonnative venomous reptile to escape through gross negligence.
- Knowingly purchase, sell, attempt to sell, offer to sell, conspire to sell, barter, exchange, trade, or import for sale or use any species of venomous reptile without having first obtained a special permit or license from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

The bill provides that a violation of any FWC rule or order requiring housing wildlife in a safe manner that results in the escape of a venomous reptile is a Level Three violation. The bill also makes multiple corresponding changes related to the enhanced penalties for certain Level Two, Three, and Four violations involving reptiles.

Level Four violations are third degree felony offenses and are punishable by up to five years imprisonment and up to a \$5,000 fine. Level Three violations are first degree misdemeanor offenses and are punishable by up to one year in the county jail and up to a \$1,000 fine. Level Two violations are either second or first degree misdemeanor offenses, depending on the offender's history.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 113-0