

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.)

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

BILL: SB 2084

INTRODUCER: Senator Richter

SUBJECT: Minimum Surplus Requirements for Mortgage Guaranty Insurers

DATE: March 30, 2010 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Messer	Burgess	BI	Favorable
2.	Johansen	McKee	FT	Favorable
3.			GA	
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

When a lending institution makes a loan to a homebuyer, it often will require that an insurance policy be written on the loan that compensates the lender in the event that the borrower fails to make payments on the loan. This type of insurance is written by mortgage guaranty insurers, which are regulated by the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR). This bill grants the OIR discretion to grant a temporary exception to mortgage guaranty insurers with regard to the current minimum capital surplus requirements. Mortgage guaranty insurance companies may request such an exception and, once a request is made, the OIR will determine whether a temporary exception should be granted. Such exceptions are at the discretion of the OIR.

This bill substantially amends s. 635.042, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Mortgage Insurance

Mortgage insurance is insurance coverage which compensates lenders in the event that the borrower defaults on a mortgage. Lenders typically require mortgage insurance for any mortgage loan that is in excess of 80% of the value of the mortgaged property. Because many homebuyers are unable to make a down payment of 20%, mortgage insurance is a vital component in Florida's housing market. Mortgage insurance makes it possible for qualified buyers to purchase a house with a smaller down payment, helping them buy a home sooner than they otherwise could. Mortgage insurance is most common for first time homebuyers.

Mortgage Insurance Capital Surplus Requirements

Mortgage insurance companies are required to maintain a sound financial structure and adequate reserves to ensure that they can meet their obligations. Minimum surplus and capital requirements for mortgage guaranty insurers writing business in Florida are found in s. 635.042, F.S. This section requires that a mortgage insurer maintain a minimum surplus of the greater of \$4 million or 10 percent of liabilities.¹ Insurers also must possess sufficient capital and surplus so that their outstanding aggregate exposure (net of reinsurance) does not exceed 25 times the insurer's paid-in-capital, surplus, and contingency reserve combined. In effect, insurers are required to set aside \$1 of capital for every \$25 of risk they insure, and are prohibited from writing new business when their risk-to-capital ratio reaches 25:1. This is an inflexible limit and the OIR currently has no discretion to broaden this limit.

The 25:1 ratio is most likely based on a study that was performed a half century ago, which suggested that a prudent reserve ratio for the industry was in a range of 12.5:1 to 40:1.² To date, 16 states require a 25:1 surplus ratio.³ These 16 states appear to have picked a point near the middle of the study's recommended range.

Mortgage guaranty insurers are also required to establish and maintain a contingency reserve pursuant to s. 635.041, F.S. This reserve requires insurers to set aside 50 percent of every earned premium dollar and to maintain contributions made to the reserve. Upon approval by the mortgage guaranty insurer's state of domicile and 30 days' notice to the OIR, the contingency reserve will be made available to a mortgage guaranty insurer only when the insurer's incurred losses in a calendar year exceed 35 percent of earned premiums.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill adds language to s. 635.042(2), F.S., that grants the insurance commissioner the discretion to allow a temporary exception to the capital requirements for mortgage guaranty insurers. The bill provides that the insurance commissioner may grant a temporary exception from these requirements on case by case bases upon a finding that the mortgage guaranty insurer's financial position is reasonable in relationship to the mortgage guaranty insurer's aggregate insured risk and financial needs.

This act takes effect July 1, 2010.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

¹ Section 635.042, F.S., provides that an insurer is never required to maintain surplus in excess of \$100 million.

² See James A. Graaskamp and Richard M. Heins, *Mortgage Loan Guaranty Reconsidered—An Objective Study of Modern Mortgage Loan Default Insurance—Its Economics, Law, Regulation, and Administration as Related to Reserve Adequacy*, 1961.

³ Those states are: Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

This bill takes steps to ensure that mortgage insurance companies will continue to provide coverage on new loans. If these companies were to cease writing new coverages, the private sector would suffer due to the slowdown in new mortgages and home purchases. Conversely, by lowering insurers' capital requirements there is an increased risk that such insurers may become insolvent. If mortgage insurers were to become insolvent, the state's lenders would suffer. However, this bill appears to protect against this risk by providing requirements that the insurance commissioner must consider before granting the capital surplus exception provided for in this bill.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The OIR may experience a temporary increase in workload to conduct the required reviews of insurers seeking an exception to minimum surplus requirements. The OIR has indicated to the professional staff of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee that the increased workload will be absorbed within current resources.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

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