

**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 Judiciary

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BILL: CS/SB 602

INTRODUCER: Ethics and Elections Committee and Senator Latvala

SUBJECT: Residency of Candidates and Public Officers

DATE: March 17, 2014

REVISED: 03/21/14

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|    | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION             |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Carlton | Roberts        | EE        | <b>Fav/CS</b>      |
| 2. | Davis   | Cibula         | JU        | <b>Pre-meeting</b> |
| 3. |         |                | RC        |                    |

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Technical Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 602 clarifies what the term “residence” means when used in “residence” requirements for candidates and public officers in the Florida Constitution and Florida Statutes. The bill provides a non-exhaustive list of factors that a court may consider in determining where a candidate or officer resides. The analysis for determining a person’s “residence” applies to those subject to a residence requirement upon qualifying as a candidate, regardless of whether the person is seeking partisan office, and for the residence requirements that apply only when a person takes office.

**II. Present Situation:**

The Florida Constitution and Florida Statutes contain various provisions requiring that certain public officers “reside” in a prescribed geographic area. Some of the residence requirements apply at the time that a person qualifies as a candidate for that office, while others apply only once a person takes office. For example, the Florida Constitution specifies that, unless otherwise provided in county charter, the counties must be divided into districts and that “One commissioner residing in each district shall be elected as provided by law.”<sup>1</sup>

Currently, there is no definition of the term “residence” in the Florida Constitution or Florida Statutes that pertains to a candidate for office or a person once elected to office. However, over

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<sup>1</sup> FLA. CONST. Article VIII, s. 1(e).

the past 100 years, the courts have consistently opined that, for purposes of residence requirements, a person's residence is his or her domicile.<sup>2</sup> "Domicile" is a legal term of art. The courts have explained domicile as follows:

One can have only one domicile.<sup>3</sup> Legal residence, or domicile, means a residence at a particular place, accompanied with positive or presumptive proof of an intention to remain there for an unlimited time.<sup>4</sup> Legal residence consists of the concurrence of both fact and intention. In terms of establishing residence, the bona fides of the intention is a highly significant factor.<sup>5</sup> Historically, the place where a married person's family resides is generally deemed to be his legal residence. However, this presumption can be overcome by other circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Absence from one's current domicile or legal residence without the intent to abandon it does not result in the obtainment of a new domicile at wherever one might be presently located, even where the absence may be for an extended period of time.<sup>7</sup> Establishment of residence will usually depend on a variety of acts or declarations all of which must be weighed in the particular case as evidence would be weighed upon any other subject.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the factors that have been considered by the courts are:

- selling the home where one was previously domiciled;<sup>9</sup>
- transferring one's bank accounts to where one maintains a residence;<sup>10</sup>
- maintaining a residence with one's family;<sup>11</sup>
- where one conducts business affairs;<sup>12</sup>
- where one leases an apartment;<sup>13</sup>
- where one plans the construction of a new home;<sup>14</sup>
- where one registers as a voter;<sup>15</sup>
- where one maintains a homestead exemption;<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "The rule is well settled that the terms 'residence,' 'residing,' or equivalent terms, when used in statutes, or actions, or suits relating to taxation, right of suffrage, divorce, limitations of actions, and the like, are used in the sense of 'legal residence'; that is to say, the place of domicile or permanent abode, as distinguished from temporary residence." *Herron v. Passailaigue*, 110 So. 539, 543 (Fla. 1926).

<sup>3</sup> *Minick v. Minick*, 111 Fla. 469, (Fla. 1933).

<sup>4</sup> *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364, 368 (Fla. 1955).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Smith v. Croom*, 7 Fla. 81 (Fla. 1857).

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364 (Fla. 1955); *Wade v. Wade*, 113 So. 374 (Fla. 1927); and *Dennis v. State*, 17 Fla. 389 (1879).

<sup>8</sup> *Wade v. Wade*, 113 So. 374, 376 (Fla. 1927).

<sup>9</sup> See *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364 (Fla. 1955).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> See *id.*; see also *Smith v. Croom*, 7 Fla. 81 (1857).

<sup>12</sup> See *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364 (Fla. 1955).

<sup>13</sup> See *Frank v. Frank*, 75 So. 2d 282 (Fla. 1954).

<sup>14</sup> See *Biederman v. Cheatham*, 161 So. 2d 538 (Fla. 2d DCA 1964).

<sup>15</sup> See Op. Atty. Gen. 063-31 (March 20, 1963).

<sup>16</sup> *Weiler v. Weiler*, 861 So. 2d 472, 477 (Fla. 5th DCA 2003).

- where one has identified the residence on his or her driver's license or other government documents;<sup>17</sup>
- where one receives mail and correspondence;
- where one customarily resides;<sup>18</sup>
- whether the structure has the normal features of a home;<sup>19</sup> and
- statements made indicating intention to move to the district.<sup>20</sup>

In essence, any evidence that would indicate that one has adopted a particular location as one's home and the "chief seat of [one's] affairs and interests" would be instrumental in proving permanent residency when combined with one's intent to make that location one's permanent residence.<sup>21</sup> Although some authorities suggest that factors such as where one possesses and exercises political rights might be given less weight,<sup>22</sup> the better course indicates that all the evidence should be weighed in the totality of the circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

Failure to maintain the legal residence required results in a vacancy in office.<sup>24</sup> The Legislature has codified Article X, s. 3, Fla. Const., and provided a mechanism to address such vacancies.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, if an officer fails to maintain the residence required of him or her by law, the Governor is required to file an Executive Order with the Secretary of State setting forth the facts which give rise to the vacancy.<sup>26</sup> The office shall be considered vacant as of the date specified in the Executive Order or, in the absence of such a date, as of the date the order is filed with the Secretary of State. The office would then be filled as provided by law.<sup>27</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 602 creates two new statutes codifying the criteria used by courts to determine whether a candidate or state officer is complying with residency requirements. Newly created s. 99.0125, F.S., applies to all candidate residence requirements regardless of whether the office sought is partisan.<sup>28</sup> Newly created s. 111.015, F.S., applies to residence requirements once a person assumes office. Both new sections establish statutory guidance for determining whether a candidate or officer is a resident of the geographic area. Specifically, the bill states that a person

<sup>17</sup> See *id.*

<sup>18</sup> See *id.*

<sup>19</sup> See *Perez v. Marti*, 770 So. 2d 284 (Fla. 3rd DCA 2000).

<sup>20</sup> See *Walker v. Harris*, 398 So. 2d 955 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 1981) and *Butterworth v. Espey*, 565 So. 2d 398 (Fla. 2nd DCA 1990).

<sup>21</sup> See *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364, 368 (Fla. 1955).

<sup>22</sup> *Smith v. Croom*, 7 Fla. 81, 159 (1857).

<sup>23</sup> See *Bloomfield v. City of St. Petersburg Beach*, 82 So. 2d 364, 368 (Fla. 1955).

<sup>24</sup> Article X, s. 3, Fla. Const., provides, "Vacancy in office shall occur upon the creation of an office, upon the death, removal from office, or resignation of the incumbent or the incumbent's succession to another office, unexplained absence for sixty consecutive days, **or failure to maintain the residence required when elected or appointed**, and upon failure of one elected or appointed to office to qualify within thirty days from the commencement of the term." (Emphasis supplied.)

<sup>25</sup> Section 114.01, F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 114.01(2), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 114.04, F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Historically, courts have been reluctant to insert themselves into the political realm of whether a member can occupy a seat. Article III, s. 2, Fla. Const., provides that "Each house of the Legislature is the sole judge of the qualifications, election, and returns of its members..." As such, complaints concerning residence of a member of the Legislature should be sent to each house pursuant to its rules. Those complaints would be governed by Florida's Constitution, the Joint Rules of the Florida Legislature, and the rules of the respective house.

may have only one domicile. CS/SB 602 provides that the address of a person's domicile must be used to determine whether the residence requirement is satisfied. The building claimed as the domicile must be zoned for residential use and must comply with all requirements necessary to obtain a certificate of occupancy or certificate of completion pursuant to applicable building codes. The bill provides a non-exhaustive list of factors that may be considered in determining whether a residence requirement is satisfied. Those factors are:

- A formal declaration of domicile in the public records of the county;
- A statement, whether oral or written, indicating the intention to establish a place as his or her domicile;
- Whether he or she transferred the title to his or her previous residence;
- The address at which he or she claims a homestead exemption;
- An address at which he or she has purchased, rented, or leased property;
- The address where he or she plans to build a new home;
- The amount of time that he or she spends at property he or she owns, leases, or rents;
- Proof of payment for, and usage activity of, utilities at property owned by the candidate or public officer;
- The address at which he or she receives mail and correspondence;
- The address provided to register his or her dependent children for school;
- The address of his or her spouse or immediate family members;
- The physical address of his or her employment;
- Previous permanent residency in a state other than Florida or in another country, and the date his or her residency was terminated;
- The address on his or her voter information card or other official correspondence from the supervisor of elections providing proof of voter registration;
- The address on his or her valid Florida driver license issued under s. 322.18, F.S., valid Florida identification card issued under s. 322.051, F.S., or any other license required by law;
- The address on the title to, or a certificate of registration of, his or her motor vehicle;
- The address listed on filed federal income tax returns;
- The location where his or her bank statements and checking accounts are registered;
- A request made to a federal, state, or local government agency to update or change his or her address; and
- Whether he or she has relinquished a license or permit held in another jurisdiction.

Additionally, the bill provides that active duty military members do not automatically establish or abandon domicile in the state of Florida solely by virtue of where he or she is stationed. However, the bill does not impair the right of active duty military members to establish a new domicile.

Because the State Constitution provides that "Each house shall be the sole judge of the qualifications, elections, and returns of its members..."<sup>29</sup> this bill does not apply to members of the Legislature. However, on March 4, 2014, the opening day of the legislative session, the Senate and House of Representatives adopted Joint Rule Seven, Qualifications of Members, which establishes residency requirements for the members of the Legislature.

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<sup>29</sup> FLA. CONST. Article III, s. 2.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

## D. Other Constitutional Issues:

The issue might be raised that this legislation imposes additional residency requirements on candidates that are not required under the State Constitution. The Florida Supreme Court held in *State v. Grassi*<sup>30</sup> that the Legislature is prohibited from imposing any additional qualifications on a candidate beyond what is required in the State Constitution. In response, it could be asserted that this bill only codifies existing case law and that the bill does not actually place any residency requirements on a candidate; it provides factors that may be considered in determining whether a candidate or public officer satisfies a residency requirement.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

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<sup>30</sup> *State v. Grassi*, 532 So. 2d 1055 (Fla. 1988).

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 99.0125, and 111.015.

**IX. Additional Information:**

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

**CS by Ethics and Elections on March 3, 2014:**

The committee substitute clarifies that active duty military members do not automatically establish or abandon domicile in the state of Florida *solely* by virtue of where he or she is stationed.

- 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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