

**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 Criminal Justice

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BILL: SB 684

INTRODUCER: Senator Baxley

SUBJECT: Internet Identifiers

DATE: March 31, 2017

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Erickson	Hrdlicka	CJ	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			ACJ	
3.			AP	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 684 revises provisions requiring registered sexual predators and sexual offenders to report Internet identifiers. These revisions include modifying the definition of the term “Internet identifier” and defining a connected term “social Internet communication.” A recent Florida federal court found that the current definition of “Internet identifier” is overbroad and vague and requires an individual to either forego protected speech or run the risk of criminal prosecution.

The bill also requires a sexual predator and sexual offender to report each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name. The bill also expands third degree felony offenses involving failure to report certain information to include failure to report each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name.

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference estimates the bill will have a “positive indeterminate” prison bed impact (an unquantifiable increase in prison beds). See Section V. Fiscal Impact.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Registration of Sexual Predators and Sexual Offenders**

Florida law requires registration of any person who has been convicted or adjudicated delinquent of a specified sex offense or offenses and who meets other statutory criteria that qualify the person for designation as a sexual predator or classification as a sexual offender. The registration laws also require reregistration and provide for public and community notification of certain information about sexual predators and sexual offenders. The laws span several different chapters and numerous statutes,<sup>1</sup> and are implemented through the combined efforts of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), all Florida sheriffs, the Department of

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 775.21-775.25, 943.043-943.0437, 944.606-944.607, and 985.481-985.4815, F.S.

Corrections (DOC), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

A person is designated as a sexual predator by a court if the person:

- Has been convicted of a current qualifying capital, life, or first degree felony sex offense committed on or after October 1, 1993;<sup>2</sup>
- Has been convicted of a current qualifying sex offense committed on or after October 1, 1993, and has a prior conviction for a qualifying sex offense; or
- Was found to be a sexually violent predator in a civil commitment proceeding.<sup>3</sup>

A person is classified as a sexual offender if the person:

- Has been convicted of a qualifying sex offense and has been released on or after October 1, 1997 (the date the modern registry became effective) from the sanction imposed for that offense;
- Establishes or maintains a Florida residence and is subject to registration or community or public notification in another state or jurisdiction or is in the custody or control of, or under the supervision of, another state or jurisdiction as a result of a conviction for a qualifying sex offense; or
- On or after July 1, 2007, has been adjudicated delinquent of a qualifying sexual battery or lewd offense committed when the person was 14 years of age or older.<sup>4</sup>

Sexual predators and sexual offenders are required to report certain information, including electronic mail addresses<sup>5</sup> and Internet identifiers.<sup>6</sup> The FDLE may provide information relating to electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers maintained as part of the sexual offender registry to commercial social networking websites<sup>7</sup> or third parties designated by commercial social networking websites.<sup>8</sup> The commercial social networking website may use this information for the purpose of comparing registered users and screening potential users of the commercial social networking website against the list of electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers provided by the FDLE.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Examples of qualifying sex offenses are sexual battery by an adult on a child under 12 years of age (s. 794.011(2)(a), F.S.) and lewd battery by an adult on a child 12 years of age or older but under 16 years of age (s. 800.04(4)(a), F.S.).

<sup>3</sup> Section s. 775.21(4) and (5), F.S. The Jimmy Ryce Involuntary Civil Commitment for Sexually Violent Predators' Treatment and Care Act, part V, ch. 394, F.S., provides for the civil confinement of a group of sexual offenders who, due to their criminal history and the presence of mental abnormality, are found likely to engage in future acts of sexual violence if they are not confined in a secure facility for long-term control, care, and treatment.

<sup>4</sup> Sections 943.0435(1)(h) and 985.4815(1)(h), F.S. Sections 944.606(1)(f) and 944.607(1)(f), F.S., which address sexual offenders in the custody of or under the supervision of the Department of Corrections, also define the term "sexual offender."

<sup>5</sup> An "electronic mail address" is defined in s. 775.21(2)(g), F.S., as having the same meaning as provided in s. 668.602, F.S. Section 668.602(6), F.S., defines an "electronic mail address" as a destination, commonly expressed as a string of characters, to which electronic mail may be sent or delivered.

<sup>6</sup> Requirements to report electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers and changes in this information are in: s. 775.21(6)(a), (e), and (g) and (8), F.S.; s. 943.0435(2)(a), (4)(e), and (14)(c), F.S.; s. 944.607(4)(a) and (13)(c), F.S.; and s. 985.4815(4)(a) and (13)(b), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> For purpose of s. 943.0437, F.S., the term "commercial social networking website" means a commercially operated Internet website that allows users to create web pages or profiles that provide information about themselves and are available publicly or to other users and that offers a mechanism for communication with other users, such as a forum, chat room, electronic mail, or instant messenger. Section 943.0437(1), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 943.0437(2), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

Requirements for in-person registration and reregistration are similar for sexual predators and sexual offenders,<sup>10</sup> but the frequency of reregistration may differ.<sup>11</sup> Registration requirements may also differ based on a special status, e.g., the sexual predator or sexual offender is in the DOC's control or custody, under DOC or DJJ supervision, or in residential commitment under the DJJ.<sup>12</sup>

The FDLE, through its agency website, provides a searchable database that contains information about sexual predators and sexual offenders.<sup>13</sup> Further, local law enforcement agencies provide access to this information, typically through a link to the state public registry webpage.

Florida's registry laws meet minimum requirements of the federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), which is Title I of the Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (AWA).<sup>14</sup> The SORNA attempts to make all states' laws uniform with respect to requirements (or minimum standards) that Congress judged to be necessary to be included in states' registry laws. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) maintains the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW).<sup>15</sup> States may choose not to substantially implement the SORNA, but the AWA penalizes noncompliance by partially reducing Byrne Justice Assistance Grant funding.<sup>16</sup> The DOJ has determined that Florida has substantially implemented the SORNA.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sexual predator reporting requirements are in s. 775.21(6) and (8), F.S. Sexual offender reporting requirements are in ss. 943.0435(2-4), (7-8), and (14), 944.607(4), (9), and (13), and 985.4815(4), (9), and (13), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> A sexual predator is required to reregister each year during the month of the predator's birthday and during every third month thereafter. Section 775.21(8), F.S. A sexual offender convicted of any listed offense in s. 943.0435(14)(b), F.S., must reregister in the same manner as a sexual predator. Any other sex offender must reregister each year during the month of the offender's birthday and during the sixth month following the offender's birth month. Section 943.0435(14)(a), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>13</sup> The FDLE is the central repository for registration information. The department also maintains the state public registry and ensures Florida's compliance with federal laws. The Florida sheriffs handle in-person registration and reregistration. "About Us" (updated October 1, 2016), Florida Department of Law Enforcement, *available at* <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/About.jsp> (last visited on March 13, 2017). The FDLE maintains a database that allows members of the public to search for sexual offenders and sexual predators through a variety of search options, including name, neighborhood, and enrollment, employment, or volunteer status at a institute of higher education. Members of the public may also check whether an electronic mail address or Internet identifier belongs to a registered sexual offender or sexual predator. Offender searches and other information may be accessed from "Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators," Florida Department of Law Enforcement, *available at* <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/Search.jsp> (last visited on March 13, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> 42 U.S.C. Sections 16911 *et seq.* The Department of Justice issued guidelines for the implementation of the SORNA. The final guidelines (July 2008) and supplemental guidelines (January 11, 2011) may be accessed at "Guidelines," Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, *available at* <https://ojp.gov/smart/guidelines.htm> (last visited on March 13, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Offender searches and other information may be accessed from "NSPOW," Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, *available at* <http://www.nsopw.gov/Core/Portal.aspx> (last visited on March 13, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> *Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Fact Sheet*, Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice (updated January 1, 2016) *available at* <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=266685> (last visited on March 13, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> "Jurisdictions that have substantially implemented SORNA," Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, *available at* [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/newsroom\\_jurisdictions\\_sorna.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/smart/newsroom_jurisdictions_sorna.htm) (last visited on March 13, 2017).

## **Preliminary Injunction Precluding Enforcement of the Current Definition of Internet Identifier**

As previously noted, sexual predators and sexual offenders are required to report certain information, including Internet identifiers. The requirement to report Internet identifiers was created by the Legislature in 2014.<sup>18</sup> In 2016, the Legislature modified the original definition of “Internet identifier.”<sup>19</sup> This modified definition, which was to take effect on October 1, 2016,<sup>20</sup> expanded the original definition to include Internet identifiers associated with a website or URL<sup>21</sup> or software applications.

Section 775.21(2)(j), F.S., provides that an “Internet identifier” includes, but is not limited to, all website uniform resource locators (URLs) and application software, whether mobile or nonmobile, used for Internet communication, including anonymous communication, through electronic mail, chat, instant messages, social networking, social gaming, or other similar programs and all corresponding usernames, logins, screen names, and screen identifiers associated with each URL or application software. Internet identifier does not include a date of birth, Social Security number, personal identification number (PIN), URL, or application software used for utility, banking, retail, or medical purposes. Voluntary disclosure by a sexual predator or sexual offender of his or her date of birth, Social Security number, or PIN as an Internet identifier waives the disclosure exemption in this paragraph for such personal information.<sup>22</sup>

Shortly before the amended definition of “Internet identifier” was slated to take effect, a group of plaintiffs in Florida who had been convicted as sexual offenders filed a lawsuit against the Commissioner of the FDLE in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Florida, Tallahassee Division.<sup>23</sup> The plaintiffs argued that the prior and amended definition of “Internet identifier” violated the First Amendment and raised a vagueness challenge. The plaintiffs also moved for a preliminary injunction, which the court treated as a challenge only to the amended definition.

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<sup>18</sup> Chapter 2014-5, L.O.F.

<sup>19</sup> Chapter 2016-104, L.O.F. (amending s. 775.21(2)(i), F.S., and renumbering it as s. 775.21(2)(j), F.S.). The original definition of “Internet identifier” was all electronic mail, chat, instant messenger, social networking, application software, or similar names used for Internet communication, but did not include a date of birth, social security number, or personal identification number (PIN). Voluntary disclosure by a sexual predator of his or her date of birth, social security number, or PIN as an Internet identifier waived the disclosure exemption in this paragraph for such personal information. Section 775.21(2)(i), F.S. (2014).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> “URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator, and is used to specify addresses on the World Wide Web. A URL is the fundamental network identification for any resource connected to the web (e.g., hypertext pages, images, and sound files).” “ARCHIVED: What is a URL?”, Indiana University Information Technology Knowledge Base Repository, available at <https://kb.iu.edu/d/adnz> (last visited on March 14, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Sections 943.0435(1)(e), 944.607, and 985.4815, F.S., provide that “Internet identifier” has the same meaning as provided in s. 775.21, F.S.

<sup>23</sup> The plaintiffs filed this action against current FDLE Commissioner Richard “Rick” L. Swearingen in his official capacity. Preliminary Injunction, *Doe I et al. v. Swearingen, etc.*, Case No. 4:16-00501-RH-CAS (N.D. Fla. Sept. 27, 2016) (on file with the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice). All information regarding this case is from this source.

The court found the current definition is “hopelessly vague, chills speech protected by the First Amendment, and is far broader than necessary to serve the state’s legitimate interest in deterring or solving online sex crimes.” The court granted the preliminary injunction.

The court stated the definition “sets no outer limit, because the term is expressly ‘not limited to’ what the definition says. Having jettisoned the ordinary understanding and replaced it with an expressly unlimited description, the definition leaves a sex offender guessing at what must be disclosed.” The court also stated that the definition, “at least on many plausible readings, is hopelessly and unnecessarily broad in scope.” One of the examples the court cited in its finding was Mr. Doe’s digital subscription to a newspaper. Mr. Doe receives an e-mail every morning with the day’s headlines and e-mails every day with additional articles or breaking news. The court continued:

He plainly must register at least the URL for the newspaper, if not the URL for every article the newspaper sends. But the State has absolutely no legitimate interest in requiring a sex offender to register the URL of the newspaper or articles the offender reads. And if Mr. Doe chooses one day to make a comment on an article, he must now figure out whether the same URL is in use, and he must make his identity available to the public. Unlike every other subscriber or member of the public, Mr. Doe cannot comment anonymously. *See White v. Baker*, 696 F. Supp. 2d 1289, 1313 (N.D. Ga. 2010) (holding that enforcement of a registration requirement would irreparably harm a registered sex offender “by chilling his First Amendment right to engage in anonymous free speech”).

The order states that the preliminary injunction remains in effect until entry of a final judgment in the case or until otherwise ordered. The injunction prohibits the FDLE Commissioner<sup>24</sup> from taking any action based on the current definition of “Internet identifier.” However, the injunction does not preclude enforcement of the prior definition.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** of the bill amends s. 775.21, F.S., relating to sexual predator registration. The bill modifies the definition of “Internet identifier” in s. 775.21(2)(j), F.S. “Internet identifier” means any designation, moniker, screen name, username, or other name used for self-identification to send or receive social Internet communication. Internet identifier does not include a date of birth, social security number, personal identification number (PIN), or password. A sexual offender’s or sexual predator’s use of an Internet identifier that discloses his or her date of birth, social security number, PIN, password, or other information that would reveal the identity of the sexual offender or sexual predator waives the described disclosure exemption described in this paragraph and in s. 119.071(5)(l), F.S.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The injunction also binds the Commissioner’s “officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys - and others in active concert or participation with any of them - who receive actual notice of this injunction by personal service or otherwise.”

<sup>25</sup> A connected bill, SB 686 (2017), creates s. 119.071(5)(l), F.S., which exempts from public disclosure electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers of sexual predators and sexual offenders which they report pursuant to specified registration statutes, unless otherwise ordered by a court.

Connected to the definition of “Internet identifier,” s. 775.21(2)(m), F.S., is created, which defines “social Internet communication” as any written, spoken, or visual communication between two or more persons via chat, social media, instant messenger, social networking, social gaming, voice-over-Internet-protocol programs, or online file-sharing services. The term does not include passive browsing, reading, or viewing of the Internet; communication used for public utility, banking, retail, or medical purposes; or exclusively commercial transactions.

The following provisions of s. 775.21, F.S. are amended or created to require a sexual predator to report each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name:

- Section 775.21(6)(a)1.a., F.S., relating to information a sexual predator is required to report at initial registration.
- Section 775.21(6)(a)1., F.S., which is created by the bill, provides that any change to the following that occurs after the sexual predator initially registers must be reported as provided in s. 775.21(6)(g), (i), and (j), F.S.: permanent, temporary, or transient residence; name; electronic mail addresses; Internet identifiers and each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name; home and cellular telephone numbers; and employment information; and status at an institution of higher education.<sup>26</sup>
- Section 775.21(6)(e)2., F.S., which requires a sexual predator who is not in the custody or under the supervision of the DOC to report changes in certain information.
- Section 775.21(6)(g)5.a., F.S., which requires a sexual predator to report certain information to: the FDLE through the department’s online system or in person with the sheriff’s office; or the Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice, if the sexual predator is in custody or under the supervision of either department. The bill also modifies the current requirement for a sexual predator who is not under custody or supervision to register all electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers before using them. Under the bill, this sexual predator must register them within 48 hours after using them.
- Section 775.21(6)(g)5.c., F.S., which specifies that FDLE’s online system may be accessed by a sexual predator to report changes in certain information.
- Section 775.21(8)(a)1., F.S., which requires a sexual predator at reregistration to report any changes in certain information.

Section 775.21, F.S., which provides that it is a third degree felony for a sexual predator to fail to report certain information, is expanded to include the failure to report each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name.

Section 1 of the bill also makes several technical or conforming changes.

**Section 2** of the bill amends s. 943.0435, F.S., relating to sexual offender registration. The following provisions of s. 943.0435, F.S., are amended to require a sexual offender to report each Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name:

- Section 943.0435(2)(a) and (b), F.S., relating to information a sexual offender is required to report at initial registration and changes to that information after initial registration.
- Section 943.0435(4)(e)1., F.S., which requires a sexual offender to report certain information to the FDLE through the department’s online system or in person with the sheriff’s office; or

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<sup>26</sup> Excluding changes to Internet identifier’s corresponding website homepage or application software name, changes to all of the other noted information are already reported under current s. 775.21(6)(g), (i), or (j), F.S.

the Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice, if the sexual offender is in custody or under the supervision of either department. The bill also modifies the current requirement for a sexual offender who is not under custody or supervision to register all electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers before using them. Under the bill, this sexual offender must register them within 48 hours after using them.

- Section 943.0435(4)(e)3., F.S., which specifies that FDLE's online system may be accessed by a sexual offender to report changes in certain information.
- Section 943.0435(14)(c)1., F.S., which requires a sexual offender at reregistration to report any changes in certain information.

Section 943.0435(14)(c)4., F.S., which provides that it is a third degree felony for a sexual offender to fail to report certain information, is expanded to include the failure to report each Internet identifier's corresponding website homepage or application software name.

Section 2 of the bill also makes several technical or conforming changes.

**Sections 3-14** of the bill reenact, respectively, ss. 794.056, 921.0022, 938.085, 943.0437, 944.606, 944.607, 985.481, and 985.4815, F.S., for the purpose of incorporating amendments to ss. 775.21 and 943.0435, F.S., made by the bill.

**Section 15** of the bill provides that the bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

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:

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference, which provides the final, official prison bed impact, if any, of legislation, estimates that the bill will have a “positive indeterminate” prison bed impact (an unquantifiable increase in prison beds).<sup>27</sup>

The CJIC states that, per the Department of Corrections, in FY 2015-2016, there were 1,001 (adjusted)<sup>28</sup> offenders sentenced for registration/false information offenses relating to sexual offenders and sexual predators, with 503 (adjusted) of these offenders sentenced to prison (mean sentence length of 40.2 months and an incarceration rate of 60.5 percent adjusted and 60.4 percent unadjusted). It is unknown how many additional offenders might be added due to proposed changes made by the bill.

The FDLE states that Internet identifiers are to be reported as part of the sexual offender or sexual predator registration requirements pursuant to the federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), which is Title I of the Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act of 2006, and SORNA guidelines. According to the FDLE, failure to comply with the guideline requirements could result in a 10 percent reduction of funding provided under the Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program.<sup>29</sup>

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

A connected bill, SB 686 (2017), creates s. 119.071(5)(1), F.S., which exempts from public disclosure electronic mail addresses and Internet identifiers of sexual predators and sexual offenders which they report pursuant to specified registration statutes, unless otherwise ordered by a court.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 775.21 and 943.0435.

This bill also reenacts ss. 794.056, 921.0022, 938.085, 943.0437, 944.606, 944.607, 985.481, and 985.4815, F.S., for the purpose of incorporating amendments to ss. 775.21 and 943.0435, F.S., made by the bill.

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<sup>27</sup> Impact information was provided by staff of the Office of Economic and Demographic Research on March 6, 2017 via e-mail (on file with the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice).

<sup>28</sup> Sentencing data from the DOC is incomplete, which means that the numbers the EDR receives are potentially lower than what the actual numbers are. The EDR adjusts these numbers by the percentage of scoresheets received for the applicable fiscal year.

<sup>29</sup> 2017 FDLE Legislative Bill Analysis (SB 684) (February 9, 2017), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (on file with the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice).



**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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