

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 Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability

BILL: SB 7014

INTRODUCER: Agriculture Committee

SUBJECT: OGSR/Nonpublished Reports or Data/Department of Citrus

DATE: March 21, 2017

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
	<u>Akhavein</u>	<u>Becker</u>		AG Submitted as Committee Bill
1.	<u>Kim</u>	<u>Ferrin</u>	<u>GO</u>	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 7014 continues the public records exemption for information contained in nonpublished reports or data related to studies or research that concerns citrus fruit, citrus fruit juices, and the products and byproducts that is conducted, caused to be conducted, or funded by the Department of Citrus. The bill removes the scheduled October 2, 2017, repeal date.

Since the bill does not expand or create an exemption to public records law, the bill requires a majority vote of each chamber for passage.

The bill has an effective date of October 1, 2017.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records Law

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to inspect or copy records made or received in connection with official governmental business.¹ This applies to the official business of any public body, officer or employee of the state, including all three branches of state government, local governmental entities, and any person acting on behalf of the government.²

¹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

² *Id.*

In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes provides that the public may access legislative and executive branch records.³ Chapter 119, F.S., constitutes the main body of public records laws, and is known as the Public Records Act.⁴ The Public Records Act states that

it is the policy of this state that all state, county and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person. Providing access to public records is a duty of each agency.⁵

According to the Public Records Act, a public record includes virtually any document or recording, regardless of its physical form or how it may be transmitted.⁶ The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted public records as being “any material prepared in connection with official agency business which is intended to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge of some type.”⁷ A violation of the Public Records Act may result in civil or criminal liability.⁸

The Legislature may create an exemption to public records requirements.⁹ An exemption must pass by a two-thirds vote of the House and the Senate.¹⁰ In addition, an exemption must explicitly lay out the public necessity justifying the exemption, and the exemption must be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the exemption.¹¹ A statutory exemption which does not meet these criteria may be unconstitutional and may not be judicially saved.¹²

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is “confidential and exempt” or “exempt.”¹³ Records designated as “confidential and exempt” may be released by the records custodian only under the circumstances defined by the Legislature.

³ The Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records. *Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So. 2d 32 (Fla. 1992). Also see *Times Pub. Co. v. Ake*, 660 So. 2d 255 (Fla. 1995). The Legislature’s records are public pursuant to s. 11.0431, F.S. Public records exemptions for the Legislatures are primarily located in s. 11.0431(2)-(3), F.S.

⁴ Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes.

⁵ Section 119.01(1), F.S.

⁶ Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines “public record” to mean “all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.” Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines “agency” to mean as “any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency.”

⁷ *Shevin v. Byron, Harless, Schaffer, Reid and Assoc. Inc.*, 379 So. 2d 633, 640 (Fla. 1980).

⁸ Section 119.10, F.S. Public records laws are found throughout the Florida Statutes, as are the penalties for violating those laws.

⁹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. New-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999). See also *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004).

¹³ If the Legislature designates a record as confidential, such record may not be released to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. *WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So. 2d 48 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

Records designated as “exempt” are not required to be made available for public inspection, but may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.¹⁴

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (referred to hereafter as the “OGSR”) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or open meetings exemptions.¹⁵ The OGSR provides that an exemption automatically repeals on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment; in order to save an exemption from repeal, the Legislature must reenact the exemption.¹⁶

The OGSR provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary.¹⁷ An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if it meets one of the following purposes *and* the Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

- It allows the state or its political subdivision to effectively and efficiently administer a program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;¹⁸
- Releasing sensitive personal information would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual’s safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt;¹⁹ or
- It protects trade or business secrets.²⁰

The OGSR also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.²¹ In examining an exemption, the OGSR asks the Legislature to carefully question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If, in reenacting an exemption, the exemption is expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.²² If the exemption is reenacted without substantive changes or if the exemption is narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote

¹⁴ *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

¹⁵ Section 119.15, F.S. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S., provides that an exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more information or to include meetings. The OGSR does not apply to an exemption that is required by federal law or that applies solely to the Legislature or the State Court System pursuant to section 119.15(2), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

¹⁸ Section 119.15(6)(b)1., F.S.

¹⁹ Section 119.15(6)(b)2., F.S.

²⁰ Section 119.15(6)(b)3., F.S.

²¹ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The specified questions are:

1. What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption?
2. Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public?
3. What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption?
4. Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means?
If so, how?
5. Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption?
6. Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

²² FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(c).

for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to sunset, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless provided for by law.²³

Florida Department of Citrus

The Florida Citrus Commission acts as the head of the Department of Citrus (the department).²⁴ The department carries out commission policy and acts as the commission's staff by conducting a wide variety of programs involving regulation, scientific, market, and economic research, advertising, merchandising, public and industry relations, and consumer promotion. The purpose of the department is to protect and enhance the quality and reputation of Florida citrus fruit and processed citrus products in both domestic and foreign markets. It also acts to protect public health and welfare and to stabilize and protect the state's citrus industry.

Current law provides that the powers of the department include the preparation and dissemination of important information to citrus growers, handlers, shippers, processors and industry-related and interested persons and organizations relating to department activities and the production, handling, shipping, processing, and marketing of citrus fruit and processed citrus products. Any such information described above that constitutes a trade secret is confidential and exempt from public records requirements and must not be disclosed.²⁵

Citrus Research

Section 601.13(2), F.S., authorizes the department to:

- Conduct, or cause to be conducted, a thorough and comprehensive study of citrus fruit and citrus fruit juices;
- Provide suitable and sufficient laboratory facilities and equipment, making use of the laboratory facilities and equipment of the University of Florida, for the purpose of conducting thorough and comprehensive study and research;
- Carry on, or cause to be carried on, suitable experiments in an effort to prove the commercial value of each, and determine and develop new and further use for citrus fruit and citrus fruit juices or the products and byproducts into which the same can be converted or manufactured;
- Carry on, or cause to be carried on, suitable experiments in an effort to prove the commercial value of any and all new profitable methods and instruments of distribution of citrus fruit and citrus fruit juices and the products and byproducts into which the same can be converted or manufactured; and
- Conduct or cause to be conducted any research related to disease and crop efficiency that would advance the purposes of the state's citrus industry and commercialization related to advancing such research.

²³ Section 119.15(7), F.S.

²⁴ See generally s. 601.04, F.S.

²⁵ Section 601.10(8), F.S.

Department of Citrus Public Records Exemption for Nonpublished Reports or Data

The department receives guidance from the citrus industry regarding research projects and industry needs. Before the exemption, companies with brand name products were sometimes hesitant to cooperate and give access to samples of citrus fruits and citrus products.

Section 601.10(8)(b), F.S., provides that the citrus research conducted or sponsored by the department remains confidential and exempt from public disclosure until it is published.

Staff Review of the Exemptions

The Open Government Sunset Review Act requires that a public records exemption must serve an identifiable public purpose in order to be maintained. As part of the Open Government Sunset Review process to determine this, professional staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee sent a questionnaire to the department. The department recommended reenactment of the exemption without changes.²⁶

If the exemption is permitted to sunset, the department would be adversely affected because premature publication of incomplete research could interfere with the

[d]epartment's ability to conduct research paid for by the Florida citrus grower, as well impugn the credibility and veracity of the research performed... possibly resulting in research with no value to the industry who paid for it.²⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 removes the scheduled repeal date of October 2, 2017, in the public records exemption law. Effectively, the bill permits the public records exemption relating to information contained in nonpublished reports or data related to certain studies or research related to citrus fruit, citrus fruit juices, and the products and byproducts that the department is involved with to continue as it currently exists.

Section 2 provides that this act shall take effect October 1, 2017.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

The bill does not expand the current exemption, and therefore public necessity statements are not required. Since there is no expansion of the exemption, a simple majority vote is sufficient for passage.

²⁶ The survey is on file with the Senate Agriculture Committee.

²⁷ *Senate Agency Bill Analysis Request: SB0714* (sic), Department of Citrus

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

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.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 601.10, Florida Statutes.

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.