

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 820

INTRODUCER: Senator Powell

SUBJECT: Firesafety Inspectors

DATE: January 22, 2018

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Peacock	Caldwell	GO	Pre-meeting
2.			CJ	
3.			RC	

I. Summary:

SB 820 creates s. 633.217, F.S., and prohibits certain actions to influence a firesafety inspector by coercion or compensation to violate the Florida Fire Prevention Code, any rules adopted by the State Fire Marshal, or any provision of ch. 633, F.S.

The bill imposes criminal penalties for violation of the prohibited provisions. A first offense constitutes a first degree misdemeanor. A subsequent offense after a prior conviction constitutes a third degree felony.

The bill takes effect on October 1, 2018.

II. Present Situation:

Division of the State Fire Marshal

State law on fire prevention and control is provided in ch. 633, F.S. Section 633.104(1), F.S., designates the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) as the State Fire Marshal, operating through the Division of the State Fire Marshal (Division).¹ Pursuant to this authority, the State Fire Marshal:

- Regulates, educates or trains, and certifies fire service personnel;²
- Investigates the causes of fires;³
- Enforces arson laws;⁴
- Regulates the installation and maintenance of fire equipment;⁵

¹ The head of the Department of Financial Services (DFS) is the Chief Financial Officer. The Division of the State Fire Marshal is located within the DFS. *See* s. 20.121, F.S.

² Section 633.128(1), F.S. *Also see* Ch. 633, Part IV: Fire Standards and Training, F.S.

³ Sections 633.104(2)(e), and 633.112, F.S.

⁴ Section 633.104(2)(e), F.S.

⁵ Section 633.104(2)(b), F.S. *Also see* s. 633.104(2)(c), F.S., and Ch. 633, Part III: Fire Protection and Suppression, F.S.

- Conducts firesafety inspections of state buildings;⁶
- Develops firesafety standards;⁷
- Provides facilities for the analysis of fire debris;⁸ and
- Operates the Florida State Fire College.⁹

The Division consists of the two bureaus: the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (BFST), and the Bureau of Fire Prevention.¹⁰ The Florida Fire College, part of the BFST, trains over 6,000 students per year.¹¹ The Inspections Section, under the Bureau of Fire Prevention, annually inspects more than 14,000 state-owned buildings and facilities. Over 1.8 million fire and emergency reports are collected every year. These reports are entered into a database to form the basis for the State Fire Marshal's annual report.¹²

Florida Fire Prevention Code

The State Fire Marshal adopts by rule the Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC), which contains all firesafety laws and rules that pertain to and govern the design, construction, erection, alteration, modification, repair, and demolition of public and private buildings, structures, and facilities and the enforcement of such firesafety laws and rules.¹³ The State Fire Marshal adopts a new edition of the FFPC every three years.¹⁴ The FFPC includes national firesafety and life safety standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA),¹⁵ including the NFPA's Fire Code (1), Life Safety Code (101) and Guide on Alternative Approaches to Life Safety (101A).¹⁶

Firesafety Enforcement by Local Governments

State law requires all municipalities, counties, and special districts with firesafety responsibilities to enforce the FFPC as the minimum fire prevention code to operate uniformly among local governments and in conjunction with the Florida Building Code.¹⁷ These local enforcing authorities may adopt more stringent firesafety standards, subject to certain requirements in

⁶ Section 633.218, F.S.

⁷ Ch. 633, Part II: Fire Safety and Prevention, F.S.

⁸ Section 633.432, F.S.

⁹ Section 633.128(1)(h)–(q), F.S. *Also see* ss. 633.428–633.434, F.S.

¹⁰ *See* <https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/sfm/> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

¹¹ *See* Division of State Fire Marshal, *About the Florida State Fire Marshal*,

<http://www.myfloridacfo.com/division/sfm/AbouttheStateFireMarshal.htm> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Section 633.202(1), F.S. *See also* ch. 69A-60, F.A.C.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Section 633.202(2), F.S. Founded in 1895, the NFPA is a global, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. It has developed over 300 voluntary consensus codes and standards in the areas of fire, electrical, and building safety which are widely used by state and local officials. *See* NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, *About NFPA*, available at <http://www.nfpa.org/about-nfpa> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

¹⁶ The NFPA states that the Guide on Alternative Approaches to Life Safety “is intended to be used in conjunction with the NFPA 101: Life Safety Code, not as a substitute.” NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, *NFPA 101A: Guide on Alternative Approaches to Life Safety*, available at <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=101A> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

¹⁷ Sections 633.108 and 633.208, F.S.

s. 633.208, F.S.,¹⁸ but may not enact firesafety ordinances which conflict with ch. 633, F.S., or any other state law.¹⁹

The chiefs of local government fire service providers (or their designees) are authorized to enforce ch. 633, F.S., and the rules prescribed by the State Fire Marshal within their respective jurisdictions as agents of those jurisdictions, not agents of the State Fire Marshal.²⁰ Each county, municipality, and special district with firesafety enforcement responsibilities is also required to employ or contract with a firesafety inspector (certified by the State Fire Marshal) to conduct all firesafety inspections required by law.²¹

Firesafety Inspectors

Section 633.102(12), F.S., defines a firesafety inspector as an individual who holds a current and valid Fire Safety Inspector Certificate of Compliance issued by the Division under s. 633.216, F.S., who is officially assigned the duties of conducting firesafety inspections of buildings and facilities on a recurring or regular basis on behalf of the state or any county, municipality, or special district with fire safety responsibilities.²² The BFST issues certifications for Firesafety Inspector I and Firesafety Inspector II.

A person applying for certification as a Firesafety Inspector I must:²³

- Be a high school graduate or the equivalent and at least 18 years of age;
- Not have been convicted of a misdemeanor relating to the certification or to perjury or false statements, or a felony or a crime punishable by imprisonment of one year or more, or be dishonorably discharged from the Armed Forces of the United States;
- Submit a set of fingerprints to the Division with a current processing fee; and
- Have a good moral character.

A Firesafety Inspector I Certificate of Compliance will be issued by the Division to an individual who:²⁴

- Successfully completes a minimum of 200 hours of basic certification training for firesafety inspectors, or has received equivalent training in another state; and
- Pass a state written examination.

The Firesafety Inspector I Certificate of Compliance is valid for a period of 4 years from the date of issuance. Renewal of this certificate includes completion of at least 54 hours of continuing education during the preceding 4 year period.²⁵

¹⁸ See also Rule 69A-60.002, F.A.C.

¹⁹ Section 633.214(4), F.S. The State Fire Marshal maintains a list of local amendments to the FFPC. This information is available at <https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/SFM/bfp/LocalAmendments.htm> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

²⁰ Section 633.118, F.S.

²¹ Section 633.216(1), F.S.

²² See also s. 633.214(1)(a), F.S.

²³ Section 633.412(1)–(4), F.S.

²⁴ Section 633.216(2), F.S., and ch. 69A-39, F.A.C. See also Division of State Fire Marshal, BFST, *Certification and Testing* available at <https://www.myfloridacfo.com/Division/SFM/BFST/Standards/default.htm> (last visited on Jan. 18, 2018).

²⁵ Section 633.216(4), F.S., and Rule 69A-39.009(1)(b), F.A.C.

A Firesafety Inspector II Certificate of Compliance will be issued by the Division to an individual who:²⁶

- Is certified as a Firesafety Inspector I; and
- Successfully completes a minimum of 160 hours of certification training for firesafety inspector II, or has received equivalent training in another state.

Criminal Penalties

Section 633.122, F.S., provides that a person who falsely assumes or pretends to be the State Fire Marshal, an agent of the State Fire Marshal, a firefighter, a volunteer firefighter, or a firesafety inspector by identifying herself or himself as the State Fire Marshal, an agent of the State Fire Marshal, a firefighter, a volunteer firefighter, or a firesafety inspector by wearing a uniform or presenting or displaying a badge as credentials that would cause a reasonable person to believe that she or he is a State Fire Marshal, an agent of the State Fire Marshal, a firefighter, a volunteer firefighter, or firesafety inspector commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in ss. 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.,²⁷ or, if the impersonation occurs during the commission of a separate felony by that person, commits a felony of the first degree, punishable as provided in ss. 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.²⁸

Section 468.629, F.S., prohibits a person from influencing a building code enforcement official²⁹ by coercion or compensation to violate provisions of Part XII; Building Code Administrators and Inspectors, ch. 468, F.S., the Florida Building Code,³⁰ a local building code or ordinance, or another law of this state. A person who violates this provision commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.³¹ A person who violates any provision after a previous conviction for such violation commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.³²

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 creates s. 633.217, F.S., and prohibits influencing a firesafety inspector by threatening, coercing, tricking, persuading, interfering with, or otherwise influencing; or attempting to threaten, coerce, trick, persuade, interfere with, or otherwise attempting to influence, the firesafety inspector into violating any provision of the Florida Fire Prevention Code, any rule adopted by the State Fire Marshal, or any provision of ch. 633, F.S.

²⁶ See *supra* note 24 and s. 633.216(8), F.S.

²⁷ Under sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S., a felony of the third degree is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 5 years, and a maximum fine of \$5,000.

²⁸ Under sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S., a felony of the first degree is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 30 years, and a maximum fine of \$10,000.

²⁹ Section 468.603(3), F.S., defines building code enforcement official or enforcement official as a licensed building code administrator, building code inspector or plans examiner.

³⁰ See Part IV: Florida Building Code, ch. 533, F.S.

³¹ Under sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S., a misdemeanor of the first degree is punishable by a term of imprisonment not to exceed 1 year, and a maximum fine of \$1,000.

³² See *supra* note 27.

Also, the bill prohibits offering any compensation to the firesafety inspector to induce a violation of the Florida Fire Prevention Code, any rule adopted by the State Fire Marshal, or any provision of ch. 633, F.S.

Additionally, a person who violates subsection (1) commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.³³ A person who violates paragraph (1)(a) after a previous conviction for violating paragraph (1)(a) commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.³⁴

Section 2 provides an effective date of October 1, 2018.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The mandate restrictions do not apply because the bill does not require counties and municipalities to spend funds, reduce counties' or municipalities' ability to raise revenue, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

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:

Indeterminate.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Indeterminate.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

³³ See *supra* note 31.

³⁴ See *supra* note 27.

VII. Related Issues:

Lines 29 through 32 of bill make a subsequent violation of influencing a firesafety inspector by coercion [subsection (1)(a) of the bill] after a previous conviction for violation subsection (1)(a) a felony of the third degree. It appears that a person who violates subsection (1)(b) = offering compensation to a firesafety inspector = after a subsequent violation of subsection (1)(b) would only be a misdemeanor of the first degree. To maintain consistency and in keeping with the intentions of the law, it follows that a subsequent violation of subsection (1)(b) should also be a felony of the third degree.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 633.217 of the 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.