

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: CS/SB 600

INTRODUCER: Innovation, Industry, and Technology Committee and Senator Gibson and others

SUBJECT: Public Records/Meter-derived Data and Billing Information

DATE: April 1, 2019

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Wiehle	Imhof	IT	Fav/CS
2.	Ponder	McVane	GO	Pre-meeting
3.			RC	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 600 amends s. 119.0713(5), F.S., to exempt from public disclosure and inspection requirements customer meter-derived data and billing information in increments of less than one billing cycle held by a utility owned or operated by a unit of local government. The bill provides legislative findings as to the public necessity for the exemption and the balancing of public and private harm.

The exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and stands repealed on October 2, 2024, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created or expanded exemption for public records and public meetings. The bill creates a public meeting exemption, therefore it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

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 In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes provide 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:

[i]t 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

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

¹ FLA. CONST. art. I, s. 24(a).

² *Id.*

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 Legislature 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” 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 *Halifax Hosp. Medical Center v. News-Journal Corp.*, 724 So. 2d 567 (Fla. 1999). In *Halifax Hospital*, the Florida Supreme Court found that a public meetings exemption was unconstitutional because the statement of public necessity did not define important terms and did not justify the breadth of the exemption. *Id.* at 570. The Florida Supreme Court also

When creating a public records exemption, the Legislature may provide that a record is “confidential and exempt” or “exempt.”¹² Records designated “confidential and exempt” may be released by the records custodian only under the circumstances defined by the Legislature. Records designated as “exempt” may be released at the discretion of the records custodian under certain circumstances.¹³

Current Public Records Exemption for Specified Types of Information Held by a Utility Owned or Operated by a Unit of Local Government

Section 119.011, F.S., defines the term “utility” to mean a person or entity that provides electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, water, chilled water, reuse water, or wastewater.

Subsection 119.0713(5), F.S., exempts the following information held by a utility owned or operated by a unit of local government:

- Information related to the security of the technology, processes, or practices of a utility owned or operated by a unit of local government that are designed to protect the utility’s networks, computers, programs, and data from attack, damage, or unauthorized access, which information, if disclosed, would facilitate the alteration, disclosure, or destruction of such data or information technology resources.
- Information related to the security of existing or proposed information technology systems or industrial control technology systems of a utility owned or operated by a unit of local government, which, if disclosed, would facilitate unauthorized access to, and alteration or destruction of, such systems in a manner that would adversely impact the safe and reliable operation of the systems and the utility.

The exemption applies to such information before, on, or after the effective date of this exemption, March 24, 2016. The exemption is subject to the OGSR and stands repealed on October 2, 2021, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 119.0713(5), F.S., which currently exempts from public disclosure specified types of information held by a utility¹⁴ owned or operated by a unit of local government. The bill expands the current public records exemption to include customer meter-derived data and billing information in increments of less than one billing cycle.

declined to narrow the exemption in order to save it. *Id.* In *Baker County Press, Inc. v. Baker County Medical Services, Inc.*, 870 So. 2d 189 (Fla. 1st DCA 2004), the court found that the intent of a public records statute was to create a public records exemption. The *Baker County Press* court found that since the law did not contain a public necessity statement, it was unconstitutional. *Id.* at 196.

¹² 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).

¹³ *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So. 2d 683 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991).

¹⁴ Section 119.011, F.S., defines the term “utility” to mean a person or entity that provides electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, water, chilled water, reuse water, or wastewater.

This section also delays the scheduled repeal of the public records exemptions for information held by a utility owned or operated by a unit of local government from October 2021 to October 2024.

Section 2 sets forth the required public necessity statement. The Legislature finds that it is a public necessity that customer meter-derived data and billing information in increments less than one billing cycle held by a utility that is owned or operated by a unit of local government be exempt from public records law requirements. The Legislature finds that safeguarding customer meter-derived data and billing information in increments of less than one billing cycle is of the utmost importance. Smart meters, which can record and transmit detailed data on a customer's use of utility services, present unique security concerns. These concerns were addressed in a report released in October 2010 by the United States Department of Energy titled "Data Access and Privacy Issues Related to Smart Grid Technologies."¹⁵ The report recommended that customer data be protected from release to third parties. This detailed customer data can be used to specifically identify minute-by-minute usage patterns, including the exact appliance or service being used. This information creates significant security issues for both businesses and homeowners.

Section 3 provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

Not applicable. 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:

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created or expanded exemption for public records and public meetings. The bill creates a public meeting exemption, therefore it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

Vote Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a bill creating or expanding exemptions to the public records and public meetings requirements. This bill enacts new exemption; thus, the bill requires a two-thirds vote to be enacted.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a bill creating or expanding exemptions to the public records and public meetings requirements to state with

¹⁵ Available at https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/gcprod/documents/Broadband_Report_Data_Privacy_10_5.pdf (last accessed March 6, 2019).

specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption. Section 2 of the bill contains a statement of public necessity for the exemptions.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires exemptions to the public records and public meetings requirements to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the stated purpose of the law. The purpose of the law is to protect detailed customer data that can be used to specifically identify minute-by-minute usage patterns. The bill makes exempt meter-derived data and billing information in increments less than one billing cycle. The bill appears to be no broader than necessary to accomplish its stated purpose.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The private sector will be subject to the cost associated with an agency making redactions in response to public records requests.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Utilities owned or operated by a unit of local government may incur additional costs associated with performing redactions of customer meter-derived data and billing information in increments of less than one billing cycle in response to public records requests. However, the cost is anticipated to be insignificant.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 119.0713 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

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

CS by Innovation, Industry, and Technology on March 6, 2019:

The committee substitute revises the findings of public necessity to more completely identify the risks to customers whose information might otherwise be disclosed.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.

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