

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 945 Emergency Management Powers of Political Subdivisions

SPONSOR(S): Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee, Rommel and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee	12 Y, 6 N, As CS	Nations	Dearden
2) Local Administration & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee			
3) State Affairs Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Florida law provides that counties and municipalities are authorized and empowered to make, amend, and rescind orders and rules as are necessary for emergency management purposes that are not inconsistent with any orders or rules adopted by the Division of Emergency Management or by any state agency exercising a power delegated to it by the Governor or the division. All orders and rules adopted by any county or municipality have the full force and effect of law when filed in the office of the clerk or recorder of the political subdivision; however, any order or rule inconsistent with the State Emergency Management Act or the Florida Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act will be suspended to the extent that such conflict exists. The duration of a local state of emergency is seven days, but may be extended in seven-day increments as necessary.

The bill defines the term “significant emergency order” as an order or ordinance issued by a political subdivision in response to an emergency pursuant to the Emergency Management Act or ch. 381, F.S., relating to public health emergencies, that applies to all residents within the political subdivision and limits the right of a resident to:

- Exercise religious freedom, including the right to attend a religious service;
- Speak freely or assemble;
- Work, be rewarded for industry, or enter into a contract;
- Travel;
- Acquire, possess, or protect real or personal property;
- Not be subject to unreasonable search and seizure; or
- Purchase, keep, or bear a lawful firearm or ammunition.

The bill provides that an exception may be made for first responders, health care practitioners, and employees of a public utility company.

The bill provides that the intent of the Legislature is to minimize the negative effects of an extended significant emergency order issued by a political subdivision. As such, the bill requires a significant emergency order issued by a political subdivision to be narrowly tailored and limited in duration, applicability, and scope to reduce any infringement on individual liberty to the greatest extent possible.

The bill provides that a significant emergency order automatically expires seven days after issuance and may be extended, as necessary, in seven-day increments for a total duration of 42 days.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on the state or local governments.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

State Emergency Management Act

Chapter 252, F.S., the State Emergency Management Act (Act), establishes the framework for how Florida prepares, responds, and recovers from emergencies and disasters. It confers upon the Governor, the Division of Emergency Management (division),¹ and the governing body of each county and municipality certain emergency powers in the event of emergencies² and disasters³ resulting from natural,⁴ technological,⁵ or manmade⁶ causes to ensure preparations of the state will be adequate to deal with, reduce vulnerability to, and recover from such emergencies and disasters; to provide for the common defense and to protect the public peace, health, and safety; and to preserve the lives and property of the people of the state.⁷

The Governor, the division, and counties and municipalities have specific emergency powers and authority granted to them in the event of an emergency. The individual powers are broad, but also include specific parameters in which they may be executed.

Governor

The Act vests the authority to declare a state of emergency in the Governor.⁸ The Act authorizes the Governor to assume or delegate direct operational control over all or any part of emergency management functions in the event of an emergency.⁹ This authority includes issuing executive orders, proclamations, and rules that have the force and effect of law.¹⁰ The Act specifically authorizes the Governor to use all resources of state government and counties and municipalities of the state as reasonably necessary to cope with the emergency.¹¹ Although the emergency powers reside in the Governor, the Governor may delegate certain powers to the State Coordinating Officer to manage and coordinate emergency efforts.¹²

¹ The Division of Emergency Management is established within the Executive Office of the Governor as a separate budget entity. It is responsible for all professional, technical, and administrative support functions necessary to carry out its responsibilities under part I of ch. 252, F.S. The director of the division is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor, and is the head of the division for all purposes. Section 14.2016(1), F.S.

² "Emergency" means any occurrence, or threat thereof, whether natural, technological, or manmade, in war or in peace, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the population or substantial damage to or loss of property. Section 252.34(4), F.S.

³ "Disaster" means any natural, technological, or civil emergency that causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to result in a declaration of a state of emergency by a county, the Governor, or the President of the United States. Section 252.34(2), F.S.

⁴ "Natural emergency" means an emergency caused by a natural event, including, but not limited to, a hurricane, a storm, a flood, severe wave action, a drought, or an earthquake. Section 252.34(8), F.S.

⁵ "Technological emergency" means an emergency caused by technological failure or accident, including, but not limited to, an explosion, transportation accident, radiological accident, or chemical or other hazardous material incident. Section 252.34(10), F.S.

⁶ "Manmade emergency" means an emergency caused by an action against persons or society, including, but not limited to, enemy attack, sabotage, terrorism, civil unrest, or other action impairing the orderly administration of government. Section 252.34(7), F.S.

⁷ Section 252.32, F.S.

⁸ Section 252.36(2), F.S.

⁹ Section 252.36(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 252.36(1)(b), F.S.

¹¹ Section 252.36(5)(b), F.S.

¹² The State Coordinating Officer (SCO) is the authorized representative of the Governor to manage and coordinate state and local emergency response and recovery efforts. The SCO is provided the authority to commit any and all state

The Governor must delegate emergency responsibilities to officers and agencies of the state and to counties and municipalities prior to an emergency and threat of an emergency and must use the services and facilities of existing officers and agencies of the state and counties and municipalities as the primary emergency management forces of the state. All such officers and agencies must cooperate with and extend their services and facilities to the division, as it may require.¹³

Political Subdivisions

Safeguarding the life and property of its citizens is an innate responsibility of the governing body of each county and municipality of the state. Counties and municipalities have certain duties and responsibilities in order to provide effective and orderly governmental control and coordination of emergency operations, including a requirement that counties adopt an emergency management plan that is coordinated and consistent with the state comprehensive emergency management plan and program.¹⁴

Counties and municipalities have the authority to declare a state of local emergency if an emergency affects only one political subdivision, which triggers the ability to request state assistance or invoke emergency-related mutual-aid assistance.¹⁵ A state of local emergency may only be declared by a mayor, city manager, or board of county commissioners.¹⁶ The duration of a local state of emergency is seven days, but may be extended in seven-day increments as necessary.

Counties and municipalities are authorized and empowered to make, amend, and rescind orders and rules as are necessary for emergency management purposes that are not inconsistent with any orders or rules adopted by the division or by any state agency exercising a power delegated to it by the Governor or the division.¹⁷ All orders and rules adopted by any county or municipality have the full force and effect of law when filed in the office of the clerk or recorder of the political subdivision; however, any order or rule inconsistent with the State Emergency Management Act or the Florida Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act will be suspended to the extent that such conflict exists. Furthermore, any person violating any rule or order issued pursuant to either act is guilty of a second-degree misdemeanor and may be punished by a term of up to 60 days in jail and fines up to \$500.¹⁸

Public Health Emergencies

The State Health Officer is responsible for declaring public health emergencies, issuing public health advisories, and ordering isolation or quarantines.¹⁹ The term “public health emergency” specifically includes occurrences whether natural or manmade that result or may result in substantial injury or harm to the public health. Before declaring a public health emergency, the State Health Officer must, to the extent possible, consult with the Governor and notify the Chief of Domestic Security. A public health emergency may not continue longer than 60 days unless the Governor concurs in the renewal of the declaration.

resources necessary to cope with the emergency and the authority to exercise those powers in accordance with ss. 252.36(3)(a) and 252.36(5)-(10), F.S. Executive Order 20-52 designated the Director of the Division of Emergency Management as the SCO and the State Health Officer and Surgeon General as a Deputy SCO.

¹³ Section 252.36(8), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 252.38(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 252.38(3)(a)5., F.S.

¹⁶ 2020 State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Basic Plan, p. 15.

¹⁷ Section 252.46, F.S.

¹⁸ See s. 252.50, F.S.

¹⁹ Section 381.00315, F.S.

The declaration empowers the State Health Officer to take actions necessary to protect the public health, including, but not limited to:

- Directing manufacturers of prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs to give priority shipping of specified drugs to certain pharmacies and hospitals;
- Directing pharmacies to compound bulk prescription drugs;
- Temporarily reactivating inactive licenses of certain healthcare professionals; and
- Ordering an individual to be examined, tested, vaccinated, treated, isolated, or quarantined.

The Department of Health (DOH) has the duty and authority to declare, enforce, modify, and abolish the isolation and quarantine of persons, animals, and premises as circumstances indicate for controlling communicable diseases or providing protection from unsafe conditions that pose a threat to public health (except for specified diseases). Any order of the department issued must be immediately enforceable by a law enforcement officer under s. 381.0012, F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill defines the term “significant emergency order” as an order or ordinance issued or enacted by a political subdivision in response to an emergency pursuant to the Act or chapter 381, F.S., relating to public health emergencies, that applies to all residents within the political subdivision and limits the right of a resident to:

- Exercise religious freedom, including the right to attend a religious service;
- Speak freely or assemble;
- Work, be rewarded for industry, or enter into a contract;
- Travel;
- Acquire, possess, or protect real or personal property;
- Not be subject to unreasonable search and seizure; or
- Purchase, keep, or bear a lawful firearm or ammunition.

The bill allows for exceptions to be made for first responders, health care practitioners, and public utility employees.

The bill provides that the intent of the Legislature is to minimize the negative effects of an extended significant emergency order issued by a political subdivision. As such, the bill requires a significant emergency order issued by a political subdivision to be narrowly tailored and limited in duration, applicability, and scope to reduce any infringement on individual liberty to the greatest extent possible.

The bill provides that a significant emergency order automatically expires seven days after issuance and may be extended, as necessary, in seven-day increments for a total duration of 42 days.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends s. 252.38, F.S., providing a definition for a significant emergency order issued by a political subdivision, exceptions for specified occupations, requirements for purpose and scope, and for the expiration and renewal of such orders.

Section 2: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2021.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

None

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

None

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditures of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

Not applicable

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 9, 2021, the Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee adopted one amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Removes the referendum requirement;
- Provides legislative intent;
- Specifies requirements for purpose and scope of significant emergency orders; and
- Provides that significant emergency orders automatically expire seven days after issuance, but may be extended, as necessary, in seven-day increments for a total duration of not more than 42 days.

The analysis is drafted to the Committee Substitute adopted by the Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee.