

CHAPTER 2021-215

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 781

An act relating to public records; amending s. 28.222, F.S.; deleting obsolete language; amending s. 28.2221, F.S.; deleting obsolete language; prohibiting a county recorder from removing a grantor name, grantee name, or party name from the register of the Official Records and the index on the publicly available website unless the information is subject to a specified public records exemption; prohibiting a county recorder from placing certain information on the publicly available website; prescribing requirements for a person claiming a public records exemption to request removal of information from a publicly available website, subject to penalty of perjury; prescribing the release of restricted information to the individual whose information was removed, subject to penalty of perjury; authorizing specified parties to access information recorded in the Official Records of a county which is otherwise exempt pursuant to a specified public records exemption, for a specific purpose, if specified conditions are met; requiring a sworn affidavit, subject to penalty of perjury; providing criminal penalties for the unlawful use of any official record; amending s. 119.071, F.S.; requiring that a request for maintenance of an exemption be notarized and confirm the individual's status; prescribing procedures for the removal of exempt information for a county property appraiser and county tax collector; requiring the release of information restricted from public display to the individual whose information was removed; providing disclosure of exempt information under specified circumstances to specified entities; providing that the exempt status of a home address contained in the Official Records is maintained only during a certain period; requiring the employee to submit a written request to release removed information upon the conveyance of his or her dwelling location; prescribing procedures to release certain information for a decedent under specified conditions; specifying that such release is not subject to a fee; amending s. 695.22, F.S.; deleting obsolete language; requiring the daily schedule of deeds and conveyances to include notification of any information therein which is subject to a request for removal; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (7) of section 28.222, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

28.222 Clerk to be county recorder.—

(7) All instruments recorded in the Official Records ~~are shall always be~~ open to the public, under the supervision of the clerk, for the purpose of inspection thereof and of making copies ~~extracts~~ therefrom; but the clerk is ~~shall not be~~ required to perform any service in connection with such

inspection or making of copies extracts without payment of service charges as provided in s. 28.24.

Section 2. Subsection (2) and paragraphs (a) and (c) of subsection (5) of section 28.2221, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsections (6) and (7) are added to that section, to read:

28.2221 Electronic access to official records.—

(2)(a) ~~No later than January 1, 2002,~~ The county recorder in each county ~~must~~ shall provide a current index of documents recorded in the official records of the county for the period beginning no later than January 1, 1990, on a publicly available Internet website which ~~must~~ shall also contain a document requisition point for obtaining images or copies of the documents reflected in the index and which has the capability of electronically providing the index data to a central statewide search site. The index ~~must~~ shall be limited to grantor and grantee names, party names, date, book and page number, comments, and type of record.

(b) Unless otherwise required by the court, a county recorder may not remove the grantor name, grantee name, or party name from the register of the Official Records, as described in s. 28.222(2), and the index on the publicly available Internet website on the basis of an exemption as defined in s. 119.011 unless the name of the grantor or grantee includes the street address portion of the home address as defined in s. 119.071(4)(d), in which case the county recorder must remove the street address portion from display. Home addresses, as defined in s. 119.071(4)(d), which are exempt from inspection or copying under s. 119.071 must be included within the Official Records as described in s. 28.222(2) but may not be included within the index or otherwise displayed on the county recorder's publicly available Internet website on which images or copies of the county's official records are placed.

(5)(a) ~~A~~ No county recorder ~~or clerk of the court~~ may ~~not~~ place on a publicly available Internet website for general public display information made exempt from inspection or copying under s. 119.071 or any an image or copy of a public record, including an official record, ~~on a publicly available Internet website for general public display~~ if that image or copy is of a military discharge; death certificate; or a court file, record, or paper relating to matters or cases governed by the Florida Rules of Family Law, the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure, or the Florida Probate Rules.

(c) ~~No later than 30 days after June 5, 2002,~~ Notice of the right of any affected party to request removal of information or records pursuant to this subsection ~~must~~ shall be conspicuously and clearly displayed by the county recorder ~~or clerk of the court~~ on the publicly available Internet website on which images or copies of the county's public records are placed and in the office of each county recorder ~~or clerk of the court~~. ~~In addition, no later than 30 days after June 5, 2002, the county recorder or the clerk of the court must have published, on two separate dates, a notice of such right in a newspaper~~

~~of general circulation in the county where the county recorder's office is located as provided for in chapter 50. Such notice must contain appropriate instructions for making the removal request in person, by mail, by facsimile, or by electronic transmission. The notice must shall state, in substantially similar form, that any person has a right to request that a county recorder or clerk of the court remove from a publicly available Internet website information made exempt from inspection or copying under s. 119.071 or an image or copy of a public record, including an official record, from a publicly available Internet website if that image or copy is of a military discharge; death certificate; or a court file, record, or paper relating to matters or cases governed by the Florida Rules of Family Law, the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure, or the Florida Probate Rules. The notice must state that information removed as exempt under s. 119.071 will not be removed from the Official Records as described in s. 28.222(2). Such request must be made in writing and delivered in person, by mail, facsimile, or by electronic transmission, or ~~in person~~ to the county recorder or clerk of the court. The request must identify the Official Records book and page number, instrument number, or clerk's file number for any information or document identification page number of the document to be removed. For requests for removal from a person claiming a public records exemption pursuant to s. 119.071, the request must be written, notarized, state under oath the statutory basis for removal of the information, image, or copy that is restricted from general public display on the county recorder's publicly available Internet website, and confirm the individual's eligibility for exempt status. A party making a false attestation is subject to the penalty of perjury under s. 837.012. A ~~No~~ fee may not will be charged for the removal of a document pursuant to such request.~~

(6)(a) Any information restricted from general public display, inspection, or copying under paragraph (5)(a) pursuant to a request for removal made under s. 119.071 must be provided at any time to the individual whose information was removed. The written request for the restricted information must be by sworn affidavit consistent with s. 92.50 and must include the Official Records book and page number, instrument number, or the clerk's file number for any information or document to be released, and a description of the lawful purpose and identify the individual or property that is the subject of the search. Any party making a false attestation is subject to the penalty of perjury under s. 837.012. A fee may not be charged for the production of any document pursuant to such request.

(b)1. For the purpose of conducting a title search, as defined in s. 627.7711(4), of the Official Records, as described in s. 28.222(2), and upon presentation of photo identification and affirmation by sworn affidavit consistent with s. 92.50 to the county recorder, information restricted from public display, inspection, or copying under paragraph (5)(a) pursuant to a request for removal made under s. 119.071(4)(d) may be disclosed to:

a. A title insurer authorized pursuant to s. 624.401 and its affiliates as defined in s. 624.10;

b. A title insurance agent or title insurance agency as defined in s. 626.841(1) and (2), respectively; or

c. An attorney duly admitted to practice law in this state and in good standing with The Florida Bar.

2. The photo identification and affirmation by sworn affidavit may be delivered in person, by mail, or by electronic transmission to the county recorder.

3. The affiant requestor must attest to his or her authority and the authorized purpose to access exempt information pursuant to this section for the property specified within the sworn affidavit.

4. The affiant requestor must identify the Official Records book and page number, instrument number, or the clerk's file number for each document requested within the sworn affidavit, and must include a description of the lawful purpose and identify the individual or property that is the subject of the search within the sworn affidavit.

5. Affidavits submitted by a title insurer, title insurance agent, or title insurance agency must include the Florida Company Code or the license number, as applicable, and an attestation to the affiant requestor's authorization to transact business in this state. Affidavits submitted by an attorney authorized under this section must include the affiant requestor's Florida Bar number and a statement that the affiant requestor has an agency agreement with a title insurer directly or through his or her law firm.

6. The county recorder must record such affidavit in the Official Records, as described in s. 28.222(2), but may not place the image or copy of the affidavit on a publicly available Internet website for general public display.

7. Upon providing a document disclosing redacted information to an affiant requestor under this section, the county recorder must provide a copy of the affidavit requesting disclosure of the redacted information to each affected party at the address listed on the document or on the request for removal made by the affected party under s. 119.071. The county recorder must prepare a certificate of mailing to be affixed to the affidavit and must receive the statutory service charges as prescribed by s. 28.24 from the affiant requestor.

8. Any party making a false attestation under this section is subject to the penalty of perjury under s. 837.012.

(7) A person who uses any official record in a manner not authorized in this section commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. A person who unlawfully uses any official record with intent to cause bodily harm or with intent to threaten to cause bodily harm commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Section 3. Paragraph (d) of subsection (4) of section 119.071, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

119.071 General exemptions from inspection or copying of public records.—

(4) AGENCY PERSONNEL INFORMATION.—

(d)1. For purposes of this paragraph, the term:

a. “Home addresses” means the dwelling location at which an individual resides and includes the physical address, mailing address, street address, parcel identification number, plot identification number, legal property description, neighborhood name and lot number, GPS coordinates, and any other descriptive property information that may reveal the home address.

b. “Telephone numbers” includes home telephone numbers, personal cellular telephone numbers, personal pager telephone numbers, and telephone numbers associated with personal communications devices.

2.a. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of active or former sworn law enforcement personnel or of active or former civilian personnel employed by a law enforcement agency, including correctional and correctional probation officers, personnel of the Department of Children and Families whose duties include the investigation of abuse, neglect, exploitation, fraud, theft, or other criminal activities, personnel of the Department of Health whose duties are to support the investigation of child abuse or neglect, and personnel of the Department of Revenue or local governments whose responsibilities include revenue collection and enforcement or child support enforcement; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

b. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former nonsworn investigative personnel of the Department of Financial Services whose duties include the investigation of fraud, theft, workers’ compensation coverage requirements and compliance, other related criminal activities, or state regulatory requirement violations; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

c. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former nonsworn investigative personnel of the Office of Financial Regulation’s Bureau of Financial Investigations whose duties

include the investigation of fraud, theft, other related criminal activities, or state regulatory requirement violations; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

d. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former firefighters certified in compliance with s. 633.408; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such firefighters; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such firefighters are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

e. The home addresses, dates of birth, and telephone numbers of current or former justices of the Supreme Court, district court of appeal judges, circuit court judges, and county court judges; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of current or former justices and judges; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current or former justices and judges are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

f. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former state attorneys, assistant state attorneys, statewide prosecutors, or assistant statewide prosecutors; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of current or former state attorneys, assistant state attorneys, statewide prosecutors, or assistant statewide prosecutors; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current or former state attorneys, assistant state attorneys, statewide prosecutors, or assistant statewide prosecutors are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

g. The home addresses, dates of birth, and telephone numbers of general magistrates, special magistrates, judges of compensation claims, administrative law judges of the Division of Administrative Hearings, and child support enforcement hearing officers; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of general magistrates, special magistrates, judges of compensation claims, administrative law judges of the Division of Administrative Hearings, and child support enforcement hearing officers; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of general magistrates, special magistrates, judges of compensation claims, administrative law judges of the Division of Administrative Hearings, and child support enforcement hearing officers are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

h. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former human resource, labor relations, or employee relations directors, assistant directors, managers, or assistant managers of any local government agency or water management district whose duties include hiring and firing employees, labor contract negotiation, administration, or other personnel-related duties; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

i. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former code enforcement officers; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

j. The home addresses, telephone numbers, places of employment, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former guardians ad litem, as defined in s. 39.820; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such persons; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such persons are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

k. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former juvenile probation officers, juvenile probation supervisors, detention superintendents, assistant detention superintendents, juvenile justice detention officers I and II, juvenile justice detention officer supervisors, juvenile justice residential officers, juvenile justice residential officer supervisors I and II, juvenile justice counselors, juvenile justice counselor supervisors, human services counselor administrators, senior human services counselor administrators, rehabilitation therapists, and social services counselors of the Department of Juvenile Justice; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

l. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former public defenders, assistant public defenders, criminal conflict and civil regional counsel, and assistant criminal conflict and civil regional counsel; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of current or former public defenders, assistant public defenders, criminal conflict and civil regional counsel, and assistant criminal conflict and civil regional counsel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of current or former public defenders,

assistant public defenders, criminal conflict and civil regional counsel, and assistant criminal conflict and civil regional counsel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

m. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former investigators or inspectors of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such current or former investigators and inspectors; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such current or former investigators and inspectors are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

n. The home addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth of county tax collectors; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such tax collectors; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such tax collectors are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

o. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former personnel of the Department of Health whose duties include, or result in, the determination or adjudication of eligibility for social security disability benefits, the investigation or prosecution of complaints filed against health care practitioners, or the inspection of health care practitioners or health care facilities licensed by the Department of Health; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

p. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former impaired practitioner consultants who are retained by an agency or current or former employees of an impaired practitioner consultant whose duties result in a determination of a person's skill and safety to practice a licensed profession; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such consultants or their employees; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such consultants or employees are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

q. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former emergency medical technicians or paramedics certified under chapter 401; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such emergency medical technicians or paramedics; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such emergency

medical technicians or paramedics are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

r. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former personnel employed in an agency's office of inspector general or internal audit department whose duties include auditing or investigating waste, fraud, abuse, theft, exploitation, or other activities that could lead to criminal prosecution or administrative discipline; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and places of employment of spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

s. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former directors, managers, supervisors, nurses, and clinical employees of an addiction treatment facility; the home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution. For purposes of this sub-subparagraph, the term "addiction treatment facility" means a county government, or agency thereof, that is licensed pursuant to s. 397.401 and provides substance abuse prevention, intervention, or clinical treatment, including any licensed service component described in s. 397.311(26).

t. The home addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and photographs of current or former directors, managers, supervisors, and clinical employees of a child advocacy center that meets the standards of s. 39.3035(1) and fulfills the screening requirement of s. 39.3035(2), and the members of a Child Protection Team as described in s. 39.303 whose duties include supporting the investigation of child abuse or sexual abuse, child abandonment, child neglect, and child exploitation or to provide services as part of a multidisciplinary case review team; the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, photographs, dates of birth, and places of employment of the spouses and children of such personnel and members; and the names and locations of schools and day care facilities attended by the children of such personnel and members are exempt from s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution.

3. An agency that is the custodian of the information specified in subparagraph 2. and that is not the employer of the officer, employee, justice, judge, or other person specified in subparagraph 2. must ~~shall~~ maintain the exempt status of that information only if the officer, employee, justice, judge, other person, or employing agency of the designated employee submits a written and notarized request for maintenance of the exemption to the custodial agency. The request must state under oath the statutory basis for the individual's exemption request and confirm the individual's status as a party eligible for exempt status.

4.a. A county property appraiser, as defined in s. 192.001(3), or a county tax collector, as defined in s. 192.001(4), who receives a written and notarized request for maintenance of the exemption pursuant to subparagraph 3. must comply by removing the name of the individual with exempt status and the instrument number or Official Records book and page number identifying the property with the exempt status from all publicly available records maintained by the property appraiser or tax collector. For written requests received on or before July 1, 2021, a county property appraiser or county tax collector must comply with this sub-subparagraph by October 1, 2021. A county property appraiser or county tax collector may not remove the street address, legal description, or other information identifying real property within the agency's records so long as a name or personal information otherwise exempt from inspection and copying pursuant to this section are not associated with the property or otherwise displayed in the public records of the agency.

b. Any information restricted from public display, inspection, or copying under sub-subparagraph a. must be provided to the individual whose information was removed.

5.4. An officer, an employee, a justice, a judge, or other person specified in subparagraph 2. may submit a written request for the release of his or her exempt information to the custodial agency. The written request must be notarized and must specify the information to be released and the party that is authorized to receive the information. Upon receipt of the written request, the custodial agency must ~~shall~~ release the specified information to the party authorized to receive such information.

6.5. The exemptions in this paragraph apply to information held by an agency before, on, or after the effective date of the exemption.

7.6. Information made exempt under this paragraph may be disclosed pursuant to s. 28.2221 to a title insurer authorized pursuant to s. 624.401 and its affiliates as defined in s. 624.10; a title insurance agent or title insurance agency as defined in s. 626.841(1) or (2), respectively; or an attorney duly admitted to practice law in this state and in good standing with The Florida Bar.

8. The exempt status of a home address contained in the Official Records is maintained only during the period when a protected party resides at the dwelling location. Upon conveyance of real property after October 1, 2021, and when such real property no longer constitutes a protected party's home address as defined in sub-subparagraph 1.a., the protected party must submit a written request to release the removed information to the county recorder. The written request to release the removed information must be notarized, must confirm that a protected party's request for release is pursuant to a conveyance of his or her dwelling location, and must specify the Official Records book and page, instrument number, or clerk's file number for each document containing the information to be released.

9. Upon the death of a protected party as verified by a certified copy of a death certificate or court order, any party can request the county recorder to release a protected decedent's removed information unless there is a related request on file with the county recorder for continued removal of the decedent's information or unless such removal is otherwise prohibited by statute or by court order. The written request to release the removed information upon the death of a protected party must attach the certified copy of a death certificate or court order and must be notarized, must confirm the request for release is due to the death of a protected party, and must specify the Official Records book and page number, instrument number, or clerk's file number for each document containing the information to be released. A fee may not be charged for the release of any document pursuant to such request.

10. This paragraph is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act in accordance with s. 119.15 and shall stand repealed on October 2, 2024, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Section 4. Section 695.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

695.22 Daily schedule of deeds and conveyances filed for record to be furnished property appraiser.—After October 1, 1945, the several county recorders ~~clerks of the circuit courts~~ must shall keep and furnish to the respective county property appraisers in the counties where such instruments are recorded a daily schedule of the aforesaid deeds and conveyances so filed for recordation, in which schedule must shall be set forth the name of the grantor or grantors, the names and addresses of each grantee, and a description of the land as specified in each instrument so filed. The daily schedule must include notification of any information therein which is subject to a request for removal on file with the county recorder.

Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.

Approved by the Governor June 29, 2021.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 29, 2021.