

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 619 State Estate Tax
SPONSOR(S): Tant
TIED BILLS: IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 278

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Ways & Means Committee		Berg	Aldridge
2) Judiciary Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

An estate tax is a tax levied on the assets of an individual after his or her death. The federal government currently imposes an estate tax on certain large estates, as well a generation-skipping transfer tax for certain transfers of wealth when a generation is passed over (e.g., from grandparents directly to grandchildren). Florida currently does not tax either of these transfers; and it has not imposed these taxes on new transfers or estates for decedent dying after December 31, 2004, due to a 2001 change in federal law.

Chapter 198, F.S., provides the framework for the Florida estate tax and generation-skipping transfer tax. These taxes only apply to the extent that the federal government allows a credit against the federal tax for any amounts paid under a similar state tax. For many years, the federal government provided a credit for estate taxes and generation-skipping transfer taxes paid to a state. The estate tax credit was phased out over four years at the federal level, beginning in 2001, and ending in 2004. The generation-skipping transfer tax credit ended December 31, 2004.

Beginning with decedents who died on or after January 1, 2005, no new estates were subject to Florida estate tax or generation-skipping transfer tax under existing law. Since that date, however, Chapter 198, F.S., has continued in statute. There have been fewer and fewer estates with a liability for Florida estate tax each year, as essentially all estates for persons dying before January 1, 2005, are now closed.

Two sections, s. 198.26, and s. 198.32, F.S., continue to provide an administrative burden for personal representatives and the court system. They require proof that an estate has paid the state estate tax or is exempt from the tax, and the filing of an affidavit that no state estate tax is due before the personal representative can be discharged and probate can be closed.

HB 619 amends the Florida estate tax law to render all of Chapter 198, F.S., inapplicable to estates of decedents who die after December 31, 2004, so long as upon the date of death there is no credit for state taxes available against the federal estate or generation-skipping transfer taxes. The bill applies to all probate proceedings that are opened on or after, or for which a personal representative has not yet been discharged on or after, the effective date of the act.

The practical effect of the bill is to remove the administrative requirements under ss. 198.26 and 198.32, F.S., for all estates. This change would cease to apply if the federal government adopts a new credit against the federal estate tax or federal generation-skipping transfer tax for amounts paid for state taxes.

The Revenue Estimating Conference estimated that the bill does not impact state government revenues.

The bill is effective upon becoming law.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Current Situation

An estate tax is a tax levied on the assets of an individual left behind at their death. The federal government currently imposes an estate tax on estates valued at more than \$12.92 million.¹

Florida has had an estate tax in statute since at least the 1930s.² That estate tax has been limited in the Florida Constitution since 1930, when a constitutional amendment provided that the Legislature could levy an estate tax so long as the tax did not exceed that amount which could be “credited against or deducted from any similar tax...levied by the United States.”³ A version of that prohibition is still in Article VII, Section 5 of the Florida Constitution, which provides that no estate tax may be levied “in excess of the aggregate of amounts which may be allowed to be credited upon or deducted from any similar tax levied by the United States or any state.”

Chapter 198, F.S., provides the framework for the Florida estate tax, and is structured as what is known as a “pickup tax.” This type of tax allows a state to have an estate tax that “picks up” a portion of federal estate tax revenues without imposing any additional tax on a decedent’s estate. This was possible because the federal government previously allowed a credit against federal estate taxes for up to 16 percent of the estate’s value that was paid as state estate taxes.⁴ Before 2001, all 50 states imposed a pickup tax where the state estate tax was directly tied to the federal credit for state estate taxes paid.⁵

The credit was phased out over four years at the federal level, beginning in 2001.⁶ The phaseout was complete beginning with the estates of persons dying after December 31, 2004, and was removed from the Internal Revenue Code in 2014.⁷

Chapter 198, F.S., also provided a similar tax on generation-skipping transfers that took place at the time of a decedent’s death, up to the amount of an available federal credit for state generation-skipping transfer taxes.⁸ That credit was limited to no more than 5% of the total generation-skipping transfer tax imposed at the federal level.⁹ The credit was repealed as of December 31, 2004.¹⁰

Since January 1, 2005, Chapter 198, F.S., has remained in statute, but has had fewer and fewer estates with a liability for Florida estate or generation-skipping transfer tax, as essentially all estates for

¹ The estate tax applies to estates in excess of the basic exclusion amount found in section 2010 of the Internal Revenue Code, adjusted for inflation. The 2023 basic exclusion amount is \$12,920,000, per the IRS in the Instructions to Form 706, United States Estate Tax Return, available at <https://www.irs.gov/instructions/i706> (last visited March 5, 2023).

² See, e.g., Senate Bill 537 (1933), which adopted the “Estate Tax Law of Florida,” available at [http://edocs.dlis.state.fl.us/fldocs/leg/acts/florida/1933/LOF1933V1Pt1%20GeneralLaws%20\(Pt1\).pdf](http://edocs.dlis.state.fl.us/fldocs/leg/acts/florida/1933/LOF1933V1Pt1%20GeneralLaws%20(Pt1).pdf) (pp. 302-316) (last visited March 5, 2023).

³ 1929 HJR 35, adopted November 4, 1930, available at <http://library.law.fsu.edu/Digital-Collections/CRC/CRC-1998/conhist/1930amen.html> (last visited March 5, 2023). The amendment was adopted by a margin of 47,725 to 8,380, according to records from the Secretary of State available at <http://edocs.dlis.state.fl.us/fldocs/dos/secretarystatereport/reportofsecre19291930flor.pdf> (p. 15) (last visited March 5, 2023).

⁴ Internal Revenue Code section 2011, prior to January 1, 2002, provided a table to calculate the maximum credit amount based on the size of the estate. The highest bracket was 16%.

⁵ The Impact of the Federal Estate Tax on State Estate Taxes, October 24, 2012, Congressional Research Service, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R42788/6> (last visited March 5, 2023).

⁶ The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (PL 107-16, June 7, 2001, 115 Stat 38) phased out the credit for state estate taxes over four years in section 531 of that bill, and replaced it with a deduction for state estate taxes under IRC section 2058.

⁷ The Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014 formally removed the section from law (Pub.L. 113-295, Div. A, Title II, § 221(a)(95)(A)(i), Dec. 19, 2014, 128 Stat. 4051).

⁸ S. 198.021, F.S.

⁹ Internal Revenue Code section 2604(b) (2001).

¹⁰ Pub. L. 107-16, Sec. 532(c)(10).

persons dying before January 1, 2005, are now closed. Before the phaseout began, Florida collected roughly three-quarters of a billion dollars each year from the estate tax.¹¹

Two sections, s. 198.26, and s. 198.32, F.S., continue to provide an administrative burden for personal representatives and the court system with no apparent benefit to the state. They require evidence be filed with the court that an estate has paid the state estate tax or is exempt from the tax, and an affidavit that no state estate tax is due, before the personal representative can be discharged and the probate case can be closed.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill provides that chapter 198, F.S., does not apply to the estate of a decedent who dies after December 31, 2004, unless the federal government has adopted a credit against the federal estate tax or federal generation-skipping transfer tax for such state-level taxes.

The practical effect of the bill is to remove the administrative burdens in ss. 198.26 and 198.32, F.S.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Provides that chapter 198, F.S., only applies if there is a federal credit against estate or generation-skipping transfer taxes at the time of the decedent's death.

Section 2. Directs the Division of Law Revision to replace "the effective date of this act" with the date the act becomes a law.

Section 3. Provides that the act takes effect upon becoming law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The Revenue Estimating Conference estimated that the bill does not impact state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill removes an unnecessary administrative burden from the personal representatives of estates in probate cases.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

¹¹ 2004 Florida Tax Handbook, Estate Tax, page 56, available at <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/revenues/reports/tax-handbook/taxhandbook2004.pdf> (last visited March 5, 2023).

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not Applicable. This bill does not appear to affect county or municipal governments.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES