



April 4, 2019

The Honorable Chris Latvala
Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street, Room 222 Cap
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Re: SAC 19-02 Exemption/Postsecondary Education Executive Searches

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Senior Editor, *The Miami Herald*

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposed exemption for postsecondary education executive searches heard and approved by the House State Administration Committee this morning. It is our position that this legislation is contrary to the public interest and respectfully suggest it be withdrawn from further consideration.

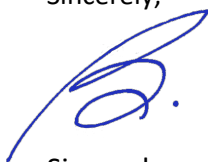
According to the statement of public necessity, the exemptions for information identifying candidates for the position of president or provost at state universities and colleges, and certain meetings related to such candidates are needed because most applicants are employed at the time of application and may fear losing their current position; as a result, the pool of qualified applicants may be diminished. In reality, Florida's universities have had great success in hiring university and college presidents in the Sunshine. Professor Karen Morian, president of the United Faculty of Florida, testified in committee this morning that there were 74 applicants for the position of president at her institution, the Florida State College at Jacksonville; of those 74 candidates, 71 were from out of state. This statistic alone calls into question the stated necessity for the exemption, but there are many other examples as well. University of Florida's Dr. W. Kent Fuchs and Dr. David Szymanski from the University of North Florida the University of Central Florida are model examples—and both were employed by other universities at the time of their application. We can cite numerous other examples, but the point is clear: The justification for this exemption is speculative at best and is not supported by the facts. In fact, it presumes that our current – and former – presidents and provosts are not the best they could be.

It is our position that the proposed exemption is detrimental in many ways—shielding individuals with less than desired histories and eliminating qualified applicants who may have applied had they had access to the list of their competitors are just two of our concerns. In addition, we believe that passage of this exemption will undoubtedly create landslide of unnecessary legislation exempting applications of *all* public positions.

Floridians have made a great investment in the state's colleges and universities, and the process of selecting applicants for these posts is an issue of wide public interest and concern. Who applies for positions within the college system or a state university, their qualifications and accomplishments, who is selected and who is not, is vitally important public information. To shield the selection process from public oversight and accountability is, we believe, bad public policy.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns on this issue, Representative Latvala. If you have any questions about our position, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B.', with a large, sweeping flourish above the letters.

Sincerely,

Cc: The Honorable Jose Oliva, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives
The Honorable Bill Galvano, President, The Florida Senate
Ms. Carol LoCicero, Thomas & LoCicero, Chair, First Amendment Foundation
Mr. Jim Baltzelle, Associated Press, Vice-Chair, First Amendment Foundation