

2-D-2 | INDIVIDUALS AUTHORIZED TO INSPECT AND RECEIVE COPIES OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Section 119.01, F.S., provides 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.” (e.s.) A state citizenship requirement was deleted from the law in 1975. A public employee is a person within the meaning of Ch. 119, F.S. and, as such, possesses the same right of inspection as any other person. AGO 75-175. Likewise, a county is “any person” who is allowed to seek public records under Ch. 119, F.S. *Hillsborough County, Florida v. Buccaneers Stadium Limited Partnership*, No. 99-0321 (Fla. 13th Cir. Ct. February 5, 1999), affirmed per curiam, 758 So. 2d 676 (Fla. 2d DCA 2000), available online in the Cases database at the open government site at myfloridalegal.com.

Thus, “the law provides any member of the public access to public records, whether he or she be the most outstanding civic citizen or the most heinous criminal.” *Church of Scientology Flag Service Org., Inc. v. Wood*, No. 97-688CI-07 (Fla. 6th Cir. Ct. February 27, 1997), available online in the Cases database at the open government site at myfloridalegal.com. “[A]s long as the citizens of this state desire and insist upon ‘open government’ and liberal public records disclosure, as a cost of that freedom public officials have to put up with demanding citizens even when they are obnoxious as long as they violate no laws.” *State v. Colby*, No. MM96-317AXX (Fla. Highlands Co. Ct. May 23, 1996), available online in the Cases database at the open government site at myfloridalegal.com.

“Even though a public agency may believe that a person or group are fanatics, harassers or are extremely annoying, the public records are available to all of the citizens of the State of Florida.” *Salvadore v. City of Stuart*, No. 91-812 CA (Fla. 19th Cir. Ct. December 17, 1991), available online in the Cases database at the open government site at myfloridalegal.com. And see *Curry v. State*, 811 So. 2d 736, 741 (Fla. 4th DCA 2002) (defendant’s conduct in making over 40 public records requests concerning victim constituted a “legitimate purpose,” and thus cannot violate the stalking law “because the right to obtain the records is established by statute and acknowledged in the state constitution”). Cf. *James v. Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District*, 820 So. 2d 988 (Fla. 4th DCA 2002), concluding that a trial court erred when it failed to hold a hearing before denying a request to require a district to permit inspection at the



district offices, rather than at an off-premises location. The agency argued that it would be “disruptive” to require that the records inspection be conducted at its offices. *Id.* However, the appeals court ruled that a hearing should have been held to determine whether the requester, who was in litigation with the district, should be allowed to view the records at the district offices, and if so, under what conditions. *Id.*

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