

2-D-3 | PURPOSE OF REQUEST

The requester is not required to explain the purpose or reason for a public records request. "The motivation of the person seeking the records does not impact the person's right to see them under the Public Records Act." *Curry v. State*, 811 So. 2d 736, 742 (Fla. 4th DCA 2002). See also *Barfield v. School Board of Manatee County*, 135 So. 3d 560, 562 (Fla. 2d DCA 2014) ("An individual's reason for requesting a public record is irrelevant"); *Timoney v. City of Miami Civilian Investigative Panel*, 917 So. 2d 885, 886n.3 (Fla. 3d DCA 2005) ("generally, a person's motive in seeking access to public records is irrelevant"); *Staton v. McMillan*, 597 So. 2d 940, 941 (Fla. 1st DCA 1992), review dismissed sub nom., *Staton v. Austin*, 605 So. 2d 1266 (Fla. 1992) (petitioner's reasons for seeking access to public records "are immaterial"); *Lorei v. Smith*, 464 So. 2d 1330, 1332 (Fla. 2d DCA 1985), review denied, 475 So. 2d 695 (Fla. 1985) (legislative objective underlying the creation of Ch. 119 was to insure to the people of Florida the right freely to gain access to governmental records; the purpose of such inquiry is immaterial); and *News-Press Publishing Company, Inc. v. Gadd*, 388 So. 2d 276, 278 (Fla. 2d DCA 1980) ("the newspaper's motives [for seeking the documents], as well as the hospital's financial harm and public harm defenses, are irrelevant in an action to compel compliance with the Public Records Act"). Cf. *Town of Gulf Stream v. O'Boyle*, 654 F. App'x 439 (11th Cir. 2016) (alleged filing of large numbers of frivolous public records requests which are then followed by lawsuits when the requests are not addressed does not constitute a predicate act under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act), and *DeMartini v. Town of Gulf Stream*, 942 F.3d 1277, 1289 (11th Cir. 2019) ("In short, a citizen's public records requests and lawsuits against the government can clearly constitute protected First Amendment activity").

Thus, an agency is not authorized to impose conditions or limit access to public records based on a suspicion that the request may be for an improper purpose. *Inf. Op. to Cook*, May 27, 2011. However, as noted in that opinion, Florida Statutes impose criminal penalties for the unauthorized use of personal identification information for fraudulent or harassment purposes and for the criminal use of a public record or public records information. See ss. 817.568 and 817.569, F.S.

Similarly, "the fact that a person seeking access to public records wishes to use them in a commercial enterprise does not alter his or her rights under Florida's public records law." *Microdecisions*,



Inc. v. Skinner, 889 So. 2d 871, 875 (Fla. 2d DCA 2004), review denied, 902 So. 2d 791 (Fla. 2005), cert. denied, 126 S.Ct. 746 (2005). See also State ex rel. Davis v. McMillan, 38 So. 666 (Fla. 1905) (abstract companies may copy documents from the clerk's office for their own use and sell copies to the public for a profit); Booksmart Enterprises, Inc. v. Barnes & Noble College Bookstores, Inc., 718 So. 2d 227, 228n.2 (Fla. 3d DCA 1998), review denied, 729 So. 2d 389 (Fla. 1999) ("Booksmart's reason for wanting to view and copy the documents is irrelevant to the issue of whether the documents are public records").

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