

Bill Number: H.B. No. 1824

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Session: Florida Legislature, Regular Session 2026

Title

An Act relating to transparency standards and disclosure requirements for news media organizations operating within the State of Florida.

Enacting Clause

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA:

Body of the Bill

Section 1. Short Title

This Act may be cited as the *Florida Transparent Journalism and Public Trust Act*.

Section 2. Purpose and Findings

The Florida Legislature finds that people need accurate and honest information in order to make good decisions in a democracy. When citizens vote, follow the news, or take part in public debates, they rely on news sources to tell the truth.

Research reported by *Florida NOW* highlights that when media organizations operate with transparency instead of secrecy, people are more likely to trust what they read and hear. The article further explains that when news outlets are open about their ownership and funding and resist efforts to control or manipulate information, this strengthens public confidence in independent reporting and democratic accountability (“Florida NOW Warns”). When ownership and funding are clear, readers are more likely to believe the news is honest and not influenced by hidden agendas.

The purpose of this Act is to create fair and reasonable transparency rules for news organizations while fully protecting freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Section 3. Definitions

News media organization means any print, television, radio, or online outlet that regularly publishes or broadcasts news to the public in Florida.

Sponsored content means any article, segment, or post that is created in exchange for money or other financial benefits.

Ownership interest means any person or company that owns ten percent or more of a news organization.

Correction notice means a public statement made to fix a factual mistake in a news story.

Conflict of interest means a financial, political, or personal connection that could affect how a journalist reports a story.

Section 4. Substantive Provisions

Ownership Transparency Requirement

All news organizations in Florida must publish a clear list of anyone who owns ten percent or more of the company. This list must be updated within thirty days of any ownership change.

Sponsored Content Labeling

If content is paid for, it must clearly say so at the beginning. The label must be written in simple language that readers can easily understand.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Journalists and editors must clearly state any conflict of interest related to the story they are reporting.

Correction Policy Requirement

Each news organization must have a public corrections page. If a mistake is confirmed, the correction must be published within seventy-two hours.

Public Feedback System

News organizations must provide a way for readers to report possible errors. The organization must respond within fifteen business days.

Protection of Editorial Freedom

Nothing in this Act allows the government to control opinions, viewpoints, or political positions. This law only requires transparency.

Section 5. Enforcement and Administration

The Florida Commission on Ethics will oversee this law. The Commission will review complaints and make sure news organizations follow transparency rules. The Commission will not review or control editorial content.

Section 6. Penalties

If a news organization knowingly breaks transparency rules, it may face a civil fine of up to five thousand dollars for the first violation and ten thousand dollars for repeated violations.

If the organization fixes the problem within thirty days, the penalty may be reduced.

There will be no criminal penalties under this Act.

Analysis of Research

Key Themes

Transparency builds trust. When people know who owns a news outlet and how stories are funded, they are more likely to trust the information (Hobbs 2).

Evidence Supporting the Bill

Research shows transparency helps individuals distinguish between independent reporting and content that may be influenced by financial or political interests. Without open disclosure, audiences are left to speculate about hidden motives, which weakens confidence in institutions and democratic systems (MacCarthy).

Stakeholders Affected

Journalists, news companies, students, teachers, voters, and local communities will all be affected.

Gaps in Current Law

Florida protects freedom of the press, but there are no statewide rules requiring ownership disclosure or clear correction policies.

Data Supporting the Approach

Research from the **Brookings Institution** emphasizes that transparency is a critical foundation for public trust and effective information governance. In his analysis, Mark MacCarthy explains that clear disclosure practices—particularly regarding decision-making processes, funding structures, and institutional accountability—allow the public to better evaluate the credibility of information sources (MacCarthy)

Background

Modern news platforms often have complicated ownership structures. Without clear disclosure laws, readers may not know who is influencing the information they receive.

Bipartisan Appeal

This bill supports honesty, accountability, and informed citizenship.

Conservatives may support this bill because it promotes transparency and allows consumers to make informed choices.

Progressives may support it because it protects communities from misinformation and strengthens civic education.

The bill is cost effective because it uses an existing state agency for oversight. It does not create a new government department.

Similar transparency laws in areas like campaign finance and consumer labeling have received bipartisan support because they provide information without limiting freedom.

Procedural and Administrative Provisions

Severability Clause

If any part of this Act is found unconstitutional, the rest of the Act will remain in effect.

Effective Date

This Act will take effect on July 1, 2027.

Repealer Clause

Any laws that conflict with this Act are repealed to the extent of the conflict.

Summary Digest

This bill requires Florida news organizations to publicly disclose major ownership interests, clearly distinguish sponsored content from independent reporting, promptly correct factual errors, and fully reveal any conflicts of interest. The Florida Commission on Ethics will oversee and enforce compliance with the law. Civil fines and escalating penalties will apply for repeated or willful violations. The goal is to strengthen transparency and accountability in journalism while safeguarding freedom of the press

Works Cited

“Florida NOW Warns: Authoritarianism Is Undermining Public Media and Reducing Democratic Accountability.” *Florida NOW*, 15 Jan. 2026,
<https://fnow.org/florida-now-warns-authoritarianism-is-undermining-public-media-and-reducing-democratic-accountability-3/>

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Hobbs, Renee. “Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action.” *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2010, pp. 15–30.
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