

Bill to Reorganize Florida IT Awaits Governor's Signature

After passing a law last year to reorganize its IT agency, the state is looking to do it again. Legislation introduced earlier this year would shift responsibilities for IT leaders, refocusing their mission on modernization.

BY LUCAS ROPEK ([HTTPS://WWW.GOVTECH.COM/AUTHORS/LUCAS-ROPEK.HTML](https://www.govtech.com/authors/lucas-ropek.html)) / APRIL 9, 2020



Part of the Florida State Capitol complex.

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In another in a long string of IT-related re-inventions, Florida seems poised to restructure its top tech offices.

Last year, the state nixed the Agency for State Technology (AST), its standalone IT office, creating instead the Division of State Technologies (DST) within the parent entity of the Department of Management Services, the state's chief business office, and merged it with the DMS' telecommunications division.

Now, after a little more than a year, the state is poised to undertake another reorganization effort, but one that seeks to re-separate the state's top IT office and the DMS' telecommunications processes.

HB 1391 (<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2020/1391>), introduced in January by Rep. James Grant, would abolish the DST and replace it with two new offices: the Florida Digital Service (FDS) and the DMS Division of Telecommunications. The digital service agency would still operate from within DMS, however.

The legislation, which has passed both the House and the Senate awaits a signature from Gov. Ron DeSantis to become law, marks one in a handful of attempts to shake up the IT service delivery in the state since 2005.

Grant said the FDS will focus on developing a statewide enterprise architecture, as well as an interoperable data system for state agencies. As such, the office will be in charge of creating a standardized language for data across agencies as a means of facilitating better sharing. With increased data sharing and a common language, Grant hopes the new approach will lead to more better decision-making for state officials and, eventually, an "Amazon-like" user experience for state residents.

Grant added he hopes Florida's digital service will be modeled on the U.S. Digital Service (<https://www.usds.gov/>), the federal executive unit dedicated to government-wide modernization efforts created during the Obama years.

"The legislature's never really done a good job of defining the mission of the agency," the lawmaker told *Government Technology*, adding that this new reorganization seeks to do just that by making distinct and specific the responsibilities of the FDS.

At the same time, the bill would also create a financial technology sandbox (<https://stpetecatalyst.com/florida-poised-to-offer-regulatory-flexibility-for-financial-innovation/>), a "business-friendly" framework that gives regulatory flexibility to tech entrepreneurs who may want to invest in Florida. This would allow the state's Office of Financial Regulation to relax certain licensure requirements for certain companies, as a way of promoting IT industry growth within the state.

“The reason that this bill is important is that Florida is tremendously behind,” Grant said, referring to the state's modernization efforts. “The state has never had a true enterprise architecture. We’ve never truly done data governance; we’ve always just operated in silos.”

The bill is expected to be signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, but due to the government’s preoccupation with COVID-19 there are likely to be delays, said Grant.

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