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S.B. 210
134th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Reported by House Civil Justice

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Gavarone

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SUMMARY

Legal relations between spouses

- Expands the ability for spouses to enter into agreements that alter legal relations.
- Establishes postnuptial agreements and treats such agreements the same as antenuptial agreements under the Revised Code.
- Allows spouses to modify antenuptial and postnuptial agreements.
- Establishes requirements for agreements entered between spouses that alter legal relations and provides that agreements that meet these requirements are valid and enforceable, with or without consideration.
- Allows a court to terminate a decree of legal separation on a motion signed by both spouses.

Dating protection orders; domestic violence shelters

- Expands the definition of “person with whom the respondent (or actor) is or was in a dating relationship” to include minors who are subject to domestic or dating violence for purposes of domestic violence protection order law and domestic violence shelters law.

Maintaining Social Security numbers

- Repeals a requirement that the record of any action for divorce, dissolution, annulment, or spousal support contain the Social Security numbers of the parties to the action.

Appointing acting judges

- Removes the population limit and in-territory residency preference for appointing certain acting municipal court or county court judges.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Altering legal relations between spouses

The bill generally expands the ability of spouses to enter into agreements with each other to alter their legal relations. The bill establishes postnuptial agreements and treats such agreements the same as antenuptial agreements. Under current law, only antenuptial agreements are recognized.

An antenuptial agreement is entered into *before* marriage. A postnuptial agreement is an agreement entered into *after* marriage.

Contracts, generally

The bill slightly modifies existing law to provide that a husband or wife may enter into an agreement or transaction with either of the following:

1. The other spouse, subject to the general rules that control the actions of persons occupying the confidential relations with each other;
2. With any other person, which either party would otherwise be able to enter into if unmarried.

The bill adds that an agreement under (1) that alters legal relations between the spouses must comply with certain requirements established under the bill (see “**Requirements for agreements altering legal relations,**” below).

Existing law provides that a husband or wife may enter into any *engagement* (rather than agreement) or transaction with the other, or with any other person, which either might if unmarried; subject, in transactions between themselves, to the general rules controlling actions of persons occupying confidential relations with each other.¹

Postnuptial and antenuptial agreements; agreements for separation

The bill also allows a husband or wife to contract with each other to do any of the following:

1. Enter into a postnuptial agreement that alters their legal relations with each other;
2. Modify or terminate an antenuptial or postnuptial agreement or any other agreement that alters their legal relations with each other;
3. Agree to an immediate separation and make provisions for the division of property and support of either of them and their children during the separation.

The bill adds that an agreement under (1) or (2) must comply with certain requirements established under the bill (see “**Requirements for agreements altering legal relations,**” below).

¹ R.C. 3103.05.

Under existing law, a husband and wife *cannot*, by any contract with each other, alter their legal relations, except to agree to an immediate separation as described under (3). Existing law also does not provide for the division of property as described under (3).²

Requirements for agreements altering legal relations

Under the bill, an agreement altering legal relations between spouses in (1) under “**Contracts, generally**” (above), or (1) or (2) under “**Postnuptial and antenuptial agreements; agreements for separation**” (above), must meet all of the following requirements:

1. The agreement is in writing and signed by both spouses;
2. The agreement is entered into freely without fraud, duress, coercion, or overreaching;
3. There was full disclosure, or full knowledge, and understanding of the nature, value, and extent of the property of both spouses;
4. The terms do not promote or encourage divorce or profiteering by divorce.

An agreement that meets all of these requirements is valid and enforceable, with or without consideration.³

Action to set aside regarding surviving spouse rights

The bill adds postnuptial agreements to an existing law provision declaring that any antenuptial or separation agreement to which a deceased spouse was a party is valid unless: (1) there is an action to set it aside that is commenced within four months after an executor or administrator was appointed to the decedent’s estate, or (2) within the four-month period, the validity of the agreement is otherwise attacked.⁴

Termination of decree of legal separation

The bill allows a court to terminate a decree of legal separation if both spouses sign a motion to do so.⁵

Definition of “separate property”

The bill modifies the definition of “separate property,” for purposes of equitable division of marital and separate property and distributive awards under marriage termination law, to include any real or personal property or interest in real or personal property that is excluded by

² R.C. 3103.06.

³ R.C. 3103.061.

⁴ R.C. 2106.22.

⁵ R.C. 3105.17(C).

a valid antenuptial or postnuptial agreement. Under existing law, this applies to antenuptial agreements only.⁶

Dating protection orders; domestic violence shelters

The bill modifies the definitions of “person with whom the respondent is or was in a dating relationship” and “person with whom the actor is or was in a dating relationship” under the domestic violence protection order law and domestic violence shelter law, respectively. Under both laws, the definition of the term is expanded to designate such *person* as an *individual*, rather than an *adult*, who, at the time of the conduct in question, is in a dating relationship with the actor or respondent who is an adult or who, within the twelve months preceding the conduct in question, has had a dating relationship with the respondent or actor who is an adult.

Under the domestic violence protection order law, the definition change would allow a minor to petition for a domestic violence protection order against an adult; current law only allows an adult to petition for an order against another adult. In the domestic violence shelter law, the definition change would include a minor provided shelter who is or was dating an actor who is an adult; current law only applies regarding adults provided shelter who was or is dating an actor who is an adult.⁷

Maintaining Social Security numbers

The bill repeals the law requiring the record of any action for divorce, dissolution, annulment, or spousal support contain the Social Security numbers of the parties to the action.⁸

Appointing acting judges

Continuing law provides for the appointment by a municipal court presiding judge or a county court presiding judge of a substitute judge or, upon the request of the applicable presiding judge, the assignment by the chief Justice of the Supreme Court of another judge in either of the following instances:⁹

- If a judge of a municipal court or a judge of a county court, as applicable, that consists of only one judge, is temporarily absent for a reason other than being incapacitated or unavailable due to disqualification, suspension, or recusal;
- If a vacancy occurs in the office of a judge of a municipal court or a judge of a county court, as applicable, that consists of two judges, or if a judge of either court of that nature is incapacitated, unavailable, or temporarily absent.

⁶ R.C. 3105.171(A)(6)(a)(v).

⁷ R.C. 3113.31(A)(9) and 3113.33(F).

⁸ R.C. 3105.72, repealed.

⁹ R.C. 1901.121(A)(2) and (B) and 1907.141(A)(2) and (B).

Under current law, in appointing a substitute judge under the above provisions, the presiding judge of a municipal court or the presiding judge of a county court, as the case may be, may appoint a substitute who is a resident of the territory of the applicable court or, if the territory of that court has a population of less than 25,000 according to the latest federal decennial census and the judge is unable to appoint a substitute who is a resident of the territory of the court, appoint a substitute who is a resident of the territory of a municipal or county court that is contiguous to the applicable court.¹⁰ The bill removes the population limit of less than 25,000 of the applicable court's territory and the presiding judge's inability to appoint a substitute who is a resident of the territory of the applicable court as conditions for appointing a substitute who is a resident of the territory of a contiguous municipal or county court.¹¹

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	07-13-21
Reported, S. Judiciary	11-10-21
Passed Senate (30-1)	11-16-21
Reported, H. Civil Justice	11-30-22

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¹⁰ R.C. 1901.121(A)(2)(a) and (B)(1) and 1907.141(A)(2)(a) and (B)(1).

¹¹ R.C. 1901.121(A)(2)(a) and (B)(1) and 1907.141(A)(2)(a) and (B)(1).