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**DATE:** January 9, 2002

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
CRIME PREVENTION CORRECTIONS & SAFETY  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 299

**RELATING TO:** Domestic Violence

**SPONSOR(S):** Representative Littlefield

**TIED BILL(S):**

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) CRIME PREVENTION CORRECTIONS & SAFETY YEAS 10 NAYS 0
  - (2) FISCAL POLICY RESOURCES
  - (3) COUNCIL FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
  - (4)
  - (5)
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**I. SUMMARY:**

The bill amends the definitions of the terms “domestic violence” and “family or household member” in four sections of Florida Statute to require present or prior co-residency between the victim and perpetrator in establishing an act of domestic violence. The bill provides, however, that present or prior co-residency is not required in cases where the victim and perpetrator have a child in common or have or had a “dating relationship.”

The term “dating relationship” is defined in the bill and is added to the scope of persons who fall within the definition of a “family or household member.”

The bill also provides for an increase in the domestic violence trust fund fee assessed a person petitioning for dissolution of marriage from \$18.00 to \$36.00.

Furthermore, the bill clarifies that if either of two criteria are met, an individual has standing to file a petition for an injunction for protection against domestic violence and delineates a list of situations that can be considered acts of violence or threatened acts of violence. The bill provides a list of factors for the court to consider when making a determination of whether the petitioner for a protective injunction has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger and provides that such petitions can be filed in the circuit where either the petitioner or respondent reside or where the domestic violence occurred. Furthermore, the bill provides that there is no minimum residency requirement to petition for an injunction, that all such proceedings must be electronically recorded and that the court shall allow an advocate from a state attorney’s office, law enforcement agency or a certified domestic violence center to be present during any court proceedings if requested by the petitioner.

The bill amends §§ 25.385, 28.101, 39.902, 390.01115, 470.002, 626.9541, 641.3903, 741.28, 741.281, 741.30, 741.31, 943.171, 985.213 and 985.215, Florida Statutes.

The bill has an effective date of October 1, 2002.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- |                                   |   |  |                              |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u>         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u>             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u>      | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u>      | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/>            | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

**Definitions of Domestic Violence and Family or Household Member**

"Domestic violence" is a term that encompasses a variety of criminal acts committed against one "family or household member" by another. The terms "domestic violence" and "family or household member" are defined in five sections of the Florida Statutes.<sup>1</sup>

"Domestic violence" was redefined in 1991 (ch. 91-210, L.O.F.) to include abuse directed from one family or household member to another, in lieu of the earlier definition which limited the term to spouses and persons related by blood or marriage. The requirement of present or prior co-residency was retained in the definition of "domestic violence". At that same time, a new term, "family and household member", was added to the statutes. However, contrary to the definition of "domestic violence", prior or present co-residency is not required to be considered a "family or household member".

The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence states that the domestic violence centers statewide are not requiring co-residency in order to receive the services of the centers. In addition, the courts have questioned whether the Legislature intended to allow for injunctions for protection against domestic violence between persons related by blood or marriage, who do not or have never resided together. See *Sharpe v. Sharpe*, 695 So.2d 1302 (Fla. 5<sup>th</sup> DCA 1997). In *Sharpe*, the court stated "[a]lthough the legislature thereafter amended subsection (e) [providing that a cause of action for an injunction may be sought between persons related by blood or marriage who are or were residing within a single dwelling unit; see § 741.30(1)(e), Florida Statutes (1990).], to eliminate the requirement that one related to the offender by blood or marriage must have resided with such offender in the same household, it failed to amend the very definition of domestic violence".

**Injunction for Protection Proceedings**

Section 741.30(1)(a), Florida Statutes, provides standing to petition for injunctive relief against domestic violence to a victim of domestic violence or to any person with "reasonable

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<sup>1</sup> §§ 25.385, 39.902, 741.28 and 943.171, Florida Statutes.

cause to believe that he or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of any act of domestic violence”.

Section 741.30(5)(a), Florida Statutes, provides that when it appears to the court that an “immediate and present danger of domestic violence exists”, the court may grant a temporary injunction ex parte without prior notice to the alleged perpetrator, pending a full hearing. Section 741.30(5)(c), Florida Statutes, provides that if the temporary injunction is granted ex parte, it is to remain in effect for up to 15 days and a full hearing must be set for a date no later than that on which the temporary injunction will expire. The respondent is required to be personally served with a copy of the petition for injunction for protection, notice of a hearing, and temporary injunction, if any, prior to the hearing. The courts are permitted to grant a continuance of the hearing for good cause shown, including the need to obtain service. Injunctions can be extended, if necessary, to remain in full force and effect during any period of continuance.

Currently, domestic violence proceedings are not required to be recorded. The Office of State Courts Administrator reports that 34 of 65 counties who reported routinely record domestic violence proceedings as a matter of local procedure. Two other counties record only the criminal order to show cause hearings, and one county records only indirect criminal contempt hearings. In *Lawrence v. Walker*, 751 So.2d 68 (Fla. 4<sup>th</sup> DCA 1999), in a concurring opinion, Chief Judge Warner noted that the court was compelled to affirm an appeal from a final judgment for protection against domestic violence because there was no transcript of the evidentiary hearing, so the appellate court could not evaluate the merits of the contentions raised by the appellant. The appellant assumed that the evidentiary hearing was a criminal proceeding, and would be recorded. Under the Family Law Rules of Procedure, there is no requirement for civil proceedings to be recorded. If the parties so desire, they must arrange in advance for the recording of the hearing. Chief Judge Warner stated, “[i]t is indeed unfortunate that parties frequently are unaware of this requirement until after the fact. With so much litigation being conducted pro se, it seems to me that in the notice for final hearing on the injunction the parties should be alerted that if they want the hearing reported it is up to them to arrange for the services of a court reporter to transcribe the proceedings. Without a record, a party’s ability to exercise their appellate rights is, in most cases, lost before the final judgment is ever entered”.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

**Definitions of Domestic Violence and Family or Household Member**

HB 299 amends the definitions of “domestic violence” and “family or household member” in four sections of Florida Statute to require present or prior co-residency between the victim and the family or household member in establishing an act of domestic violence, with the exception of when the victim and perpetrator have a child in common or have or had a “dating relationship.” These amendments would correct a current inconsistency between the definitions of “domestic violence” and “family or household member”. They would also direct the application of domestic violence related legal actions and initiatives to those victims and perpetrators who have lived in the same dwelling either currently or in the past, or those victims and perpetrators who have a child in common, or have or had a “dating relationship,” or if they have ever lived together.

## **Injunction for Protection Proceedings**

The bill clarifies existing law that a person can petition the court for an injunction for protection against domestic violence based on either one of two circumstances: the person has been a victim of domestic violence or the person has reasonable cause to believe that her or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence. While two criteria exist for filing a petition, some courts have been found to focus on one of the criteria, to the exclusion of the alternative criteria, thus limiting conditions under which a petition will be granted.

The criterion for filing a petition for an injunction for protection was changed in 1997 from requiring that the person “may become” the victim of domestic violence to the current “has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming” the victim of domestic violence (ch. 97-155, L.O.F.). That new requirement that the petitioner be in “imminent danger” of becoming a victim of domestic violence is considered by some to be problematic because of the varying interpretations and applications across the circuits, and by others to be necessary because of the significant ramifications resulting from issuing an injunction to the alleged perpetrator. According to a 1999 Senate Interim Project Report, domestic violence advocates report that the 1997 statutory change to require that the victim be in “imminent” danger in order to obtain an injunction is interpreted differently among the circuits because the term has not been defined, and is subjected to varying applications. Fla. S. Comm. on Children and Families, Interim Project Report 2000-15, *Domestic Violence Initiatives in Florida* (1999). Some courts feel that due to the extreme ramifications of injunctions, “imminent” must be defined as an impending threat to the victim. The bill provides the court with factors that, if alleged in the petition, can be considered in determining whether a petitioner is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence.

Section 741.30, Florida Statutes, is amended to provide that there is no minimum residency requirement to petition for a domestic violence injunction, that all such proceedings must be electronically recorded and that the court shall allow an advocate from a state attorney’s office, law enforcement agency or a certified domestic violence center to be present during any court proceedings if requested by the petitioner.

The bill also provides for an increase in the domestic violence trust fund fee assessed a person petitioning for dissolution of marriage from \$18.00 to \$36.00.

### **D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:**

**Section 1. Amends § 25.385, Florida Statutes,** to amend the definitions for “domestic violence” and “family or household member” to provide that present or prior co-residency between the victim and the perpetrator is required to establish an act of domestic violence, except in instances where the victim and perpetrator have a child in common. This corrects a current inconsistency in definitions between the two terms.

**Section 2. Amends § 28.101, Florida Statutes,** increases the charge from \$18.00 to \$36.00 assessed to filings for dissolution of marriage such funds to be transferred to the Domestic Violence Trust Fund.

**Section 3. Amends § 39.902, Florida Statutes,** to amend the definitions for “domestic violence” and “family or household member” to provide that present or prior co-residency between the victim and the perpetrator is required to establish an act of domestic violence, except in instances where the victim and perpetrator have a child in common. This corrects a current inconsistency in definitions between the two terms.

**Section 4. Amends § 390.01115, Florida Statutes,** to realign the reference to § 741.28 in accordance with revisions made in Section 8.

**Section 5. Amends § 470.002, Florida Statutes,** to amend the definitions for “domestic violence” and “family or household member” to provide that present or prior co-residency between the victim and the perpetrator is required to establish an act of domestic violence, except in instances where the victim and perpetrator have a child in common. This corrects a current inconsistency in definitions between the two terms.

**Section 6. Amends § 626.9541, Florida Statutes,** to realign the reference to § 741.28 in accordance with revisions made in Section 8.

**Section 7. Amends § 641.3903, Florida Statutes,** to realign the reference to § 741.28 in accordance with revisions made in Section 8.

**Section 8. Amends § 741.28, Florida Statutes,** to amend the definitions for “domestic violence” and “family or household member” and to provide a definition of “dating relationship.” The amended definitions for “domestic violence” and “family or household member” provide that present or prior co-residency between the victim and the perpetrator is required to establish an act of domestic violence, except in instances where the victim and perpetrator have a child in common. This corrects a current inconsistency in definitions between the two terms.

**Section 9. Amends § 741.281, Florida Statutes,** to delete the requirement that an individual must be in a pretrial division program as a condition precedent to mandate a court to order individuals charged with an act of domestic violence into a batterers’ intervention program.

**Section 10. Amends § 741.30, Florida Statutes,** to clarify when a person has standing to file a petition for an injunction for protection against domestic violence and to provide a delineated listing of incidents that describe violence or threatened violence. The section provides a list of criteria for the court to consider in making a determination of whether a petitioner has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of domestic violence. Also provides that there is no minimum residency requirement to petition for a domestic violence injunction and that such petition may be filed in the circuit where either the petitioner or respondent reside or where the domestic violence occurred. Additionally, requires injunction proceedings to be electronically recorded.

**Section 11. Amends § 741.31, Florida Statutes,** to add four provisions to the “violation of an injunction for protection against domestic violence” that (1) limits the distance to 500 feet an enjoined individual can be to the petitioner’s “residence, school, place of employment, or a specified place frequented regularly by the petitioner and any named family or household member;” (2) knowingly or intentionally coming within 100 feet of the petitioner’s motor vehicle; (3) defacing or destroying the petitioner’s personal property; or (4) refusing to surrender firearms or ammunition if ordered to do so by the court.

**Section 12. Amends § 943.171, Florida Statutes,** to redefine the terms “domestic violence” and “household member” consistent with the definitions provided for in § 741.28, Florida Statutes.

**Section 13. Amends § 985.213, Florida Statutes,** to realign the reference to § 741.28 in accordance with revisions made in Section 8.

**Section 14. Amends § 985.215, Florida Statutes,** to realign the reference to § 741.28 in accordance with revisions made in Section 8.

**Section 15.** Provides for an effective date of October 1, 2002.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

Section 2 raises the assessment to dissolution of marriage filings from \$18.00 to \$36.00. According to the analysis prepared by the Department of Children and Families, the anticipated revenue gain from this fee increase is \$1,400,000.

2. Expenditures:

N/A

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

N/A

2. Expenditures:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

In addition to the current \$18.00 domestic violence trust fund fee assessed parties who petitions for dissolution of marriage there is also a \$30.00 fee assessed each time a marriage licensed is issued. According to the analysis prepared by the Department of Children and Families, revenues from these two fees have decreased approximately \$500,000 over the past two (2) years.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not reduce the authority of municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill will not reduce the authority of municipalities and counties to raise revenues.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill will not reduce the state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

N/A

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

N/A

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

N/A

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

The Committee on Crime Prevention, Corrections & Safety, adopted Three (3) amendments. Amendment 1 and 2 removed from the bill proposed new language that would have made a violation of an domestic violence injunction a basis for a petition and finding of domestic violence. Amendment 3 added clarifying language to the definition of "dating relationship" in Section 8 of the bill.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON CRIME PREVENTION, CORRECTIONS & SAFETY:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

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Eric Haug

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Trina Kramer