

By Senator Berman

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1                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to decedents' property; creating s.  
3       731.1065, F.S.; specifying that precious metals are  
4       tangible personal property for the purposes of the  
5       Florida Probate Code; providing for retroactive  
6       application; amending s. 731.201, F.S.; revising the  
7       definition of the term "property"; amending s.  
8       731.301, F.S.; specifying that formal notice is not  
9       sufficient to invoke a court's personal jurisdiction  
10      over a person receiving such formal notice; providing  
11      applicability; amending s. 733.212, F.S.; revising the  
12      required contents of a notice of administration;  
13      amending s. 733.607, F.S.; specifying that a personal  
14      representative has the exclusive right to maintain an  
15      action to recover possession of property or determine  
16      the title to property; specifying that a personal  
17      representative does not have a duty to maintain  
18      certain causes of action; amending s. 733.610, F.S.;  
19      expanding the list of sales or encumbrances that are  
20      avoidable by interested persons under certain  
21      circumstances; amending s. 733.612, F.S.; revising the  
22      types of claims and proceedings a personal  
23      representative may properly prosecute or defend;  
24      amending s. 733.617, F.S.; specifying that certain  
25      attorneys and persons are not entitled to compensation  
26      for serving as a personal representative unless the  
27      attorney or person is related to the testator or  
28      unless certain disclosures are made before a will is  
29      executed; requiring the testator to execute a written

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30 statement that acknowledges that certain disclosures  
31 were made; providing requirements for the written  
32 statement; specifying when an attorney is deemed to  
33 have prepared or supervised the execution of a will;  
34 specifying how a person may be related to an  
35 individual; specifying when an attorney or a person  
36 related to the attorney is deemed to have been  
37 nominated in a will; providing construction; providing  
38 applicability; amending s. 736.0708, F.S.; specifying  
39 that certain attorneys and persons are not entitled to  
40 compensation for serving as a trustee unless the  
41 attorney or person is related to the settlor or unless  
42 certain disclosures are made before the trust  
43 instrument is executed; requiring a settlor to execute  
44 a written statement that acknowledges that certain  
45 disclosures were made; providing requirements for the  
46 written statement; specifying when an attorney is  
47 deemed to have prepared or supervised the execution of  
48 a trust instrument; specifying how a person may be  
49 related to an individual; specifying when an attorney  
50 or a person related to the attorney is deemed  
51 appointed in a trust instrument; providing  
52 construction; providing applicability; providing  
53 effective dates.

54  
55 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

56  
57 Section 1. Effective July 1, 2020, section 731.1065,  
58 Florida Statutes, is created to read:

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59       731.1065 Precious metals.-

60       (1) For the purposes of the code, precious metals in any  
61 tangible form, such as bullion or coins kept and acquired for  
62 their historical, artistic, collectable, or investment value  
63 apart from their normal use as legal tender for payment, are  
64 tangible personal property.

65       (2) This section is intended to clarify existing law and  
66 applies retroactively to all written instruments executed  
67 before, on, or after July 1, 2020, as well as all proceedings  
68 pending or commenced before, on, or after July 1, 2020, in which  
69 the disposition of precious metals in any tangible form has not  
70 been finally determined.

71       Section 2. Subsection (32) of section 731.201, Florida  
72 Statutes, is amended to read:

73       731.201 General definitions.—Subject to additional  
74 definitions in subsequent chapters that are applicable to  
75 specific chapters or parts, and unless the context otherwise  
76 requires, in this code, in s. 409.9101, and in chapters 736,  
77 738, 739, and 744, the term:

78       (32) "Property" means both real and personal property or  
79 any interest in it and anything that may be the subject of  
80 ownership, including causes of action of the estate and causes  
81 of action the decedent had at the time of death.

82       Section 3. Effective upon this act becoming a law,  
83 subsection (2) of section 731.301, Florida Statutes, is amended  
84 to read:

85       731.301 Notice.—

86       (2) In a probate proceeding, formal notice is sufficient to  
87 acquire in rem jurisdiction over the person receiving formal

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88 notice to the extent of the person's interest in the estate or  
89 in the decedent's protected homestead. Formal notice is not  
90 sufficient to invoke the court's personal jurisdiction over the  
91 person receiving formal notice.

92 Section 4. The amendment made by this act to s. 731.301,  
93 Florida Statutes, applies to all proceedings pending on or  
94 before, or commenced after, the date this act becomes a law.

95 Section 5. Paragraph (e) of subsection (2) of section  
96 733.212, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (f) is  
97 added to that subsection, to read:

98 733.212 Notice of administration; filing of objections.—

99 (2) The notice shall state:

100 (e) That, unless an extension is granted pursuant to s.  
101 732.2135(2), an election to take an elective share must be filed  
102 on or before the earlier of the date that is 6 months after the  
103 date of service of a copy of the notice of administration on the  
104 surviving spouse, or an attorney in fact or a guardian of the  
105 property of the surviving spouse, or the date that is 2 years  
106 after the date of the decedent's death.

107 (f) That, under certain circumstances and by failing to  
108 contest the will, the recipient of the notice of administration  
109 may be waiving his or her right to contest the validity of a  
110 trust or other writing incorporated by reference into a will.

111 Section 6. Subsection (1) of section 733.607, Florida  
112 Statutes, is amended to read:

113 733.607 Possession of estate.—

114 (1) Except as otherwise provided by a decedent's will,  
115 every personal representative has a right to, and shall take  
116 possession or control of, the decedent's property, except the

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117 protected homestead, but any real property or tangible personal  
118 property may be left with, or surrendered to, the person  
119 presumptively entitled to it unless possession of the property  
120 by the personal representative will be necessary for purposes of  
121 administration. The request by a personal representative for  
122 delivery of any property possessed by a beneficiary is  
123 conclusive evidence that the possession of the property by the  
124 personal representative is necessary for the purposes of  
125 administration, in any action against the beneficiary for  
126 possession of it. The personal representative shall take all  
127 steps reasonably necessary for the management, protection, and  
128 preservation of the estate until distribution and has the  
129 exclusive right to ~~may~~ maintain an action to recover possession  
130 of property or to determine the title to it. The personal  
131 representative does not have a duty to maintain a cause of  
132 action that has been abandoned, assigned, distributed, or  
133 otherwise adjudicated by court order.

134 Section 7. Effective July 1, 2020, section 733.610, Florida  
135 Statutes, is amended to read:

136 733.610 Sale, encumbrance, or transaction involving  
137 conflict of interest.—Any sale or encumbrance to the personal  
138 representative or the personal representative's spouse, agent,  
139 or attorney, or any corporation, other entity, or trust in which  
140 the personal representative, or the personal representative's  
141 spouse, agent, or attorney, has a substantial beneficial or  
142 ownership interest, or any transaction that is affected by a  
143 conflict of interest on the part of the personal representative,  
144 is voidable by any interested person except one who has  
145 consented after fair disclosure, unless:

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146 (1) The will or a contract entered into by the decedent  
147 expressly authorized the transaction; or

148 (2) The transaction is approved by the court after notice  
149 to interested persons.

150 Section 8. Subsection (20) of section 733.612, Florida  
151 Statutes, is amended to read:

152 733.612 Transactions authorized for the personal  
153 representative; exceptions.—Except as otherwise provided by the  
154 will or court order, and subject to the priorities stated in s.  
155 733.805, without court order, a personal representative, acting  
156 reasonably for the benefit of the interested persons, may  
157 properly:

158 (20) Prosecute or defend claims or proceedings in any  
159 jurisdiction for the protection of the estate, of the decedent's  
160 property, and of the personal representative.

161 Section 9. Subsection (6) of section 733.617, Florida  
162 Statutes, is amended, and subsection (8) is added to that  
163 section, to read:

164 733.617 Compensation of personal representative.—

165 (6) Except as otherwise provided in this section, if the  
166 personal representative is a member of The Florida Bar and has  
167 rendered legal services in connection with the administration of  
168 the estate, then in addition to a fee as personal  
169 representative, there also shall be allowed a fee for the legal  
170 services rendered.

171 (8) (a) An attorney serving as a personal representative, or  
172 a person related to the attorney, is not entitled to  
173 compensation for serving as a personal representative if the  
174 attorney prepared or supervised the execution of the will that

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175 nominated the attorney or person related to the attorney as  
176 personal representative, unless the attorney or person nominated  
177 is related to the testator, or the attorney makes the following  
178 disclosures to the testator before the will is executed:

179 1. Subject to certain statutory limitations, most family  
180 members, regardless of their residence, and any other persons  
181 who are residents of Florida, including friends and corporate  
182 fiduciaries, are eligible to serve as a personal representative;

183 2. Any person, including an attorney, who serves as a  
184 personal representative is entitled to receive reasonable  
185 compensation for serving as a personal representative; and

186 3. Compensation payable to the personal representative is  
187 in addition to any attorney fees payable to the attorney or the  
188 attorney's firm for legal services rendered to the personal  
189 representative.

190 (b)1. The testator must execute a written statement  
191 acknowledging that the disclosures required under paragraph (a)  
192 were made prior to the execution of the will. The written  
193 statement must be in a separate writing from the will but may be  
194 annexed to the will. The written statement may be executed  
195 before or after the execution of the will in which the attorney  
196 or related person is nominated as the personal representative.

197 2. The written statement must be in substantially the  
198 following form:

199  
200 I, ... (Name) ..., declare that:  
201

202 I have designated my attorney, an attorney employed in the  
203 same law firm as my attorney, or a person related to my attorney

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204 as a nominated personal representative in my will or codicil  
 205 dated ...(insert date)....

207 Before executing the will or codicil, I was informed that:

208 1. Subject to certain statutory limitations, most family  
 209 members, regardless of their residence, and any other  
 210 individuals who are residents of Florida, including friends and  
 211 corporate fiduciaries, are eligible to serve as a personal  
 212 representative.

213 2. Any person, including an attorney, who serves as a  
 214 personal representative is entitled to receive reasonable  
 215 compensation for serving as a personal representative.

216 3. Compensation payable to the personal representative is  
 217 in addition to any attorney fees payable to the attorney or the  
 218 attorney's firm for legal services rendered to the personal  
 219 representative.

221 ...(Signature)...

222 ...(Testator)...

223 ...(Insert date)...

225 (c) For purposes of this subsection:

226 1. An attorney is deemed to have prepared or supervised the  
 227 execution of a will if the preparation or supervision of the  
 228 execution of the will was performed by an employee or attorney  
 229 employed by the same firm as the attorney at the time the will  
 230 was executed.

231 2. A person is "related" to an individual if, at the time  
 232 the attorney prepared or supervised the execution of the will,

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233 the person is:

234 a. A spouse of the individual;

235 b. A lineal ascendant or descendant of the individual;

236 c. A sibling of the individual;

237 d. A relative of the individual or of the individual's

238 spouse with whom the attorney maintains a close, familial

239 relationship;

240 e. A spouse of a person described in sub-subparagraphs b.-

241 d.;

242 f. A person who cohabitates with the individual; or

243 g. An employee or attorney employed by the same firm as the

244 attorney at the time the will is executed.

245 3. An attorney or a person related to the attorney is

246 deemed to have been nominated in the will when the will

247 nominates the attorney or the person related to the attorney as

248 personal representative, co-personal representative, successor,

249 or alternate personal representative in the event another person

250 nominated is unable to or unwilling to serve, or provides the

251 attorney or any person related to the attorney with the power to

252 nominate the personal representative and the attorney or person

253 related to the attorney was nominated using that power.

254 (d) Other than compensation payable to the personal

255 representative, this subsection does not limit any rights or

256 remedies that any interested person may have at law or in

257 equity.

258 (e) The failure to obtain an acknowledgment from the

259 testator under this subsection does not disqualify a personal

260 representative from serving and does not affect the validity of

261 a will.

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262 (f) This subsection applies to all nominations made  
263 pursuant to a will:

264 1. Executed by a resident of this state on or after October  
265 1, 2020; or

266 2. Republished by a resident of this state on or after  
267 October 1, 2020, if the republished will nominates the attorney  
268 who prepared or supervised the execution of the instrument that  
269 republished the will, or a person related to such attorney, as  
270 personal representative.

271 Section 10. Subsection (4) is added to section 736.0708,  
272 Florida Statutes, to read:

273 736.0708 Compensation of trustee.—

274 (4) (a) An attorney serving as a trustee, or a person  
275 related to such attorney, is not entitled to compensation for  
276 serving as a trustee if the attorney prepared or supervised the  
277 execution of the trust instrument that appointed the attorney or  
278 person related to the attorney as trustee, unless the attorney  
279 or person appointed is related to the settlor or the attorney  
280 makes the following disclosures to the settlor before the trust  
281 instrument is executed:

282 1. Unless specifically disqualified by the terms of the  
283 trust instrument, any person, regardless of state of residence  
284 and including a family member, friend, or corporate fiduciary,  
285 is eligible to serve as a trustee;

286 2. Any person, including an attorney, who serves as a  
287 trustee is entitled to receive reasonable compensation for  
288 serving as trustee; and

289 3. Compensation payable to the trustee is in addition to  
290 any attorney fees payable to the attorney or the attorney's firm

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291 for legal services rendered to the trustee.

292 (b)1. The settlor must execute a written statement  
293 acknowledging that the disclosures required under paragraph (a)  
294 were made prior to the execution of the trust instrument. The  
295 written statement must be in a separate writing from the trust  
296 instrument but may be annexed to the trust instrument. The  
297 written statement may be executed before or after the execution  
298 of the trust in which the attorney or related person is  
299 appointed as the trustee.

300 2. The written statement must be in substantially the  
301 following form:

302  
303 I, ...(Name)..., declare that:

304  
305 I have designated my attorney, an attorney employed in the  
306 same law firm as my attorney, or a person related to my attorney  
307 as a trustee in my trust instrument dated ...(insert date)....

308  
309 Before executing the trust, I was informed that:

310 1. Unless specifically disqualified by the terms of the  
311 trust instrument, any person, regardless of state of residence  
312 and including family members, friends, and corporate  
313 fiduciaries, is eligible to serve as a trustee.

314 2. Any person, including an attorney, who serves as a  
315 trustee is entitled to receive reasonable compensation for  
316 servng as trustee.

317 3. Compensation payable to the trustee is in addition to  
318 any attorney fees payable to the attorney or the attorney's firm  
319 for legal services rendered to the trustee.

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...(Signature)...  
...(Settlor)...  
...(Insert Date)...

(c) For purposes of this subsection:

1. An attorney is deemed to have prepared, or supervised the execution of, a trust instrument if the preparation, or supervision of the execution, of the trust instrument was performed by an employee or attorney employed by the same firm as the attorney at the time the trust instrument was executed.

2. A person is "related" to an individual if, at the time the attorney prepared or supervised the execution of the trust instrument, the person is:

- a. A spouse of the individual;
- b. A lineal ascendant or descendant of the individual;
- c. A sibling of the individual;
- d. A relative of the individual or of the individual's spouse with whom the attorney maintains a close, familial relationship;
- e. A spouse of a person described in sub-subparagraphs b.-d.;
- f. A person who cohabitates with the individual; or
- g. An employee or attorney employed by the same firm as the attorney at the time the trust instrument is executed.

3. An attorney or a person related to the attorney is deemed appointed in the trust instrument when the trust instrument appoints the attorney or the person related to the attorney as trustee, co-trustee, successor, or alternate trustee

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349 in the event another person nominated is unable to or unwilling  
350 to serve, or provides the attorney or any person related to the  
351 attorney with the power to appoint the trustee and the attorney  
352 or person related to the attorney was appointed using that  
353 power.

354 (d) Other than compensation payable to the trustee, this  
355 subsection does not limit any rights or remedies that any  
356 interested person may have at law or equity.

357 (e) The failure to obtain an acknowledgment from the  
358 settlor under this subsection does not disqualify a trustee from  
359 serving and does not affect the validity of a trust instrument.

360 (f) This subsection applies to all appointments made  
361 pursuant to a trust agreement:

362 1. Executed by a resident of this state on or after October  
363 1, 2020; or

364 2. Amended by a resident of this state on or after October  
365 1, 2020, if the trust agreement nominates the attorney who  
366 prepared or supervised the execution of the amendment or a  
367 person related to such attorney as trustee.

368 Section 11. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this  
369 act and except for this section, which shall take effect upon  
370 this act becoming a law, this act shall take effect October 1,  
371 2020.