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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

The Committee on Judiciary (Baxley) recommended the following:

Senate Amendment (with title amendment)

Delete everything after the enacting clause
and insert:

Section 1. Section 741.0307, Florida Statutes, is created
to read:

741.0307 Florida Healthy Marriage Handbook.—

(1) There shall be created a handbook which includes
resources, information, and website links to assist in forming
and maintaining a long-term marital relationship. This handbook
is supplemental to the Family Law Handbook created under s.



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12 741.0306.

13 (2) The handbook shall read substantially as follows:

14

15 Introduction

16

17 Congratulations! You have made the decision to get married. This
18 decision means that you and your partner agree to enter into a
19 formal contract. This contract outlines the conditions of your
20 new partnership. This partnership impacts the ownership of your
21 money and possessions and the way you relate to each other. When
22 you talk about your marriage expectations before getting
23 married, you begin to understand the new roles and
24 responsibilities. This mutual understanding helps to lay a
25 foundation that can help you build a successful, enduring
26 marriage.

27

28 The purpose of this handbook is to provide information to
29 marriage license applicants that can help to create successful
30 marriages. It includes topics such as learning to communicate
31 effectively, building your team, solving problems
32 collaboratively, and resolving conflicts. The handbook also
33 provides general information on economic issues, raising a
34 family, and the consequences that occur when marriages fail.

35

36 Building a Marriage

37

38 As you and your spouse begin your journey together, the first
39 thing you will need to know is where you are going. Your shared
40 destination is determined by your personal and shared values.



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41 The marriage journey will require lots of decisions from both of
42 you. Through mutual respect, trust, honesty, and love, you will
43 have a rewarding trip.

44

45 Understanding Your Values

46

47 Your values are the foundation for all of your thinking and
48 decision-making. Every decision you make is an effort to align
49 your actions to your values. When you marry, you will be sharing
50 your life with another person. It is so important that you know
51 your own values and the values of your intended spouse. Think
52 about the values you consider sacred in your life and share this
53 information with your partner.

54

55 Discuss these issues prior to making a marriage commitment.

56 Build upon your mutual ideals. A harmonious, lasting marriage
57 will be built upon a foundation of shared values and the
58 effective communication of these values.

59

60 Building Your Team

61

62 Marriage is a team effort. One of the definitions of the word
63 team is "a group of persons pulling together." Talking to each
64 other and sharing in decisions that affect both team members is
65 very important. Talking, listening, and valuing your partner's
66 ideas and contributions will make your marriage team strong and
67 healthy.

68

69 Learning Effective Communication



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70
71 Learning to communicate effectively requires commitment from
72 both you and your partner. It takes time and LOTS of energy, but
73 it is worth the effort. To commune literally means "to put in
74 common; to share." The goal of effective communication is to
75 create a common understanding with your partner. This common
76 understanding is the cement of a strong marriage. Honesty is an
77 essential component of effective communication. However, honesty
78 must be tempered with kindness. Good communication between both
79 of you promotes mutual trust and respect.

80
81 Successful marriages depend on good communication between both
82 partners. Learning to be a good communicator takes patience and
83 practice.

84
85 Resolving Conflicts

86
87 Another step in building a lasting marriage is learning to
88 examine and confront issues effectively. Couples in the
89 healthiest marriages experience conflicts. Conflicts are normal
90 because you and your partner have different beliefs and
91 opinions. Conflict is simply a clash between these beliefs and
92 opinions. The cause of conflict is that you and your partner see
93 and approach situations and events differently. Conflict results
94 when there are opposite points of view and each person believes
95 that their viewpoint is right and their partner's viewpoint is
96 wrong. The result is two different interpretations.

97
98 People in conflict are seldom upset about what they think they



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99 are upset about. One event may trigger an emotional outburst.
100 The outburst often is caused by a series of unresolved issues. A
101 win/lose situation will not solve the problem. Resolving
102 conflicts effectively strives to achieve a win/win solution for
103 both of you. How can you find an answer that benefits you and
104 your partner? The first step is for the two of you to step out
105 of the battle and look beyond the event that created the
106 conflict. The next step is to shift your focus to your common
107 interests, mutual values, and positive qualities.

108
109 Refocusing your own thinking helps to calm emotions. You can
110 redirect your thinking – and your partner’s – to what you both
111 really want: an activity or mutual goal, something more
112 satisfying than the conflict. Couples can change their conflict
113 experiences by changing their thoughts about the situation.

114
115 Keeping the Marriage Vital

116
117 When you first get married, usually everything is new and
118 exciting. But how do you keep your marriage new and exciting
119 year after year? You have started a lifelong journey together.
120 This journey will have many stops along the way. Each of your
121 destinations will bring maturity to your relationship and to
122 each of you. Your affection for each other increases through the
123 lessons that you learn together and the laughter and the tears
124 that you share. It is a good journey! Couples who can laugh
125 together under challenging circumstances and gain the
126 understanding of true friendship keep their marriage vital.

127



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128 Addressing Economic Issues

129

130 As you prepare for your new journey as a couple, you have
131 several financial issues to discuss. What financial resources
132 and obligations do you bring into your marriage? Do you have
133 business debts? Will you combine your finances and have joint
134 checking and savings accounts or maintain separate accounts? Who
135 will pay the bills? Will you develop a budget together?

136

137 Talking to each other about how you plan to earn, spend, and
138 save your money is easier when you agree on priorities. Your
139 marriage benefits from forming and sticking to a spending plan
140 that includes discussion and agreement.

141

142 Sharing Financial Responsibilities

143

144 It is wise to make major financial decisions together. You both
145 will be responsible for those decisions. If you are
146 uncomfortable at the thought of sharing financial
147 responsibilities with your intended spouse, you might want to
148 seek premarital counseling to determine underlying issues and to
149 decide if marriage is the right decision for you at this time.

150

151 One of you may be better at balancing a checkbook, paying the
152 bills, and developing a budget. As you take this marital journey
153 with your partner, talk with each other about which one of you
154 is best suited to do specific financial tasks. Then, after you
155 are married, try out your new system! Adjust it if it doesn't
156 work well.



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157
158 Here are some specific financial planning tips. Decide together:

159
160 If you will maintain one joint checking account or separate
161 individual checking accounts. Who will pay the bills and
162 maintain the checking account(s)? How often and how much
163 personal allowance each of you should receive. What is an
164 appropriate savings and investment plan? How you will pay for
165 large purchases such as automobiles and major appliances.

166
167 Building a Budget

168
169 Building a budget helps you to know how much income you will
170 have, how much money you will spend, and how much money will be
171 left over. It helps you to control your spending. A budget helps
172 you to save money!

173
174 What are some steps to assist you?

175 1. Identify your financial goals: short range (e.g., buying
176 groceries and gasoline) and long term (e.g., buying a house,
177 setting up a college fund for your children).

178 2. Look at your current financial position. What is your
179 monthly household income? What are your debts?

180 3. Write out a monthly budget for 12 months. Write out
181 monthly expenses in the different categories (e.g., \$300 car
182 payment, \$600 rent). Estimate how much you will spend in each
183 category.

184 4. Compare your budget to your financial goals. Is there
185 money left over after meeting your monthly obligations? If so,



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186 how much of the leftover money can be used for your goals? If
187 you follow the budget you set up, how long will it take you to
188 reach your goals?

189 5. Compare your actual costs to the costs you budgeted. Was
190 your budget realistic?

191 6. Review and revise your budget. Stay on track toward
192 meeting your joint financial goals.

193 7. Decide who will work, who will provide childcare, and
194 who will obtain further formal education.

195 8. How much insurance will be necessary?

196
197 It is important to make your budget realistic and flexible.
198 Major categories of expenses are: rent or mortgage payment;
199 utilities; food and household goods; clothing; healthcare;
200 insurance premiums; tuition, charitable donations;
201 transportation; household maintenance; credit card debt; hobbies
202 and entertainment; vacation and holiday savings; and other
203 expenses, such as cosmetics, hair care, veterinary fees (if you
204 have pets), gifts, plants, and artwork.

205
206 Certain budget items are fundamental expenditures or
207 "absolutes," such as housing, food, and transportation. Other
208 budget items are less important. Other budget items are
209 "discretionary expenditures," such as hobbies, vacations, gifts,
210 and artwork are a lower priority than housing and food.
211 Prioritize your budget items, starting with "absolutes."

212
213 Involve your spouse in major budget decisions. Talk together
214 about the mutual benefit and impact of your budget decisions.



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215 For example, what should you do if one of you wants a new
216 computer while the other wants new carpet, and there is money
217 for only one of the two items?

218
219 Which of the purchases is most needed and beneficial to both of
220 you? What is the impact on the quality of your life together if
221 you buy the computer? The carpeting? Set your purchasing
222 priorities together. Be a team working towards your shared
223 financial goals.

224
225 Raising a Family

226
227 Deciding to start a family is a BIG decision! The change you
228 experienced when your household became two triples with the
229 addition of a child! Children bring great joy, sleepless nights,
230 and new roles and responsibilities for both of you.

231
232 Parenthood is a lifetime commitment. It requires emotional
233 maturity from both partners. Raising children can be the most
234 satisfying experience when both of you are ready to make this
235 unselfish commitment.

236
237 Taking Responsibility for Raising Children

238
239 The decision to have children needs to be mutual. Children bring
240 an enormous change to your relationship with each other. Some of
241 the spontaneity that you once had as a couple may change.
242 Fatigue from early childcare demands and feelings of uncertainty
243 in your new roles can cause temporary marital stress. Career and



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244 childcare decisions, economic implications and new financial
245 demands, and new housing requirements will need to be discussed.
246 But the joys of parenthood outweigh the tensions of change.

247
248 Raising a child is a team effort and requires both partners to
249 be active participants. You are bringing into the world a new
250 human being who will require your full support physically,
251 emotionally, socially, instructionally, and economically. Both
252 of you are responsible for your child's care. This mutual
253 responsibility for the care of your child or children never
254 ends. When you agreed to have a child, you signed on for life.

255
256 Coping with Family Challenges

257
258 Sometimes raising children can be very difficult. You may find
259 that you need help. Some children have problems making friends,
260 getting along in school, and staying out of trouble with the
261 law. Family counseling can strengthen families by providing a
262 safe place to explore issues and resolve problems.

263
264 Walking Rocky Roads

265
266 If sad times start to outweigh happy times with your spouse, you
267 are walking a lonely, rocky road in your marriage. Examine your
268 own life, your spouse's life, and your relationship with each
269 other. If you and your spouse can renew your love and commitment
270 to each other, together you can remove the obstructions in your
271 marriage. Professional counselors and/or members of the clergy
272 may help you remove some of the boulders in your marriage path.



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273 Depending on the type of problems you encounter, you may find
274 specific support groups and counseling classes to help you. Also
275 refer to the phone book or online directories for listings of
276 counselors, support groups, religious organizations, and other
277 community resources.

278
279 Conclusion

280
281 This free handbook is one way that the State of Florida is
282 showing its support of your decision to marry. The information
283 has been intended to be a basic roadmap to guide you. The State
284 of Florida hopes that you have a happy and healthy marriage!

285
286 Again, congratulations!

287
288 (3) The clerk of the circuit court shall post an electronic
289 copy of the handbook on its website. Additionally, if printed
290 copies of the handbook are made available to the office of the
291 clerk of the circuit court, the clerk shall make the handbook
292 available to marriage license applicants. The clerk of the
293 circuit court is encouraged to provide a list of course
294 providers and sites where marriage and relationship skill-
295 building classes are available.

296 Section 2. Paragraph (b) of subsection (4) of section
297 741.04, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

298 741.04 Issuance of marriage license.—

299 (4) A county court judge or clerk of the circuit court may
300 not issue a license for the marriage of any person unless the
301 county court judge or clerk of the circuit court is first



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302 presented with both of the following:

303 (b) A written statement that verifies that both parties
304 have obtained and read or otherwise accessed the information
305 contained in the handbooks ~~handbook~~ or other electronic media
306 presentation of the rights and responsibilities of parties to a
307 marriage specified in ss. 741.0306 and 741.0307 ~~s. 741.0306~~.

308 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.

309

310 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

311 And the title is amended as follows:

312 Delete everything before the enacting clause
313 and insert:

314 A bill to be entitled
315 An act relating to the Florida Healthy Marriage
316 Handbook; creating s. 741.0307, F.S.; creating the
317 Florida Healthy Marriage Handbook; providing
318 requirements for the handbook; providing for
319 distribution of printed copies of the handbook under
320 certain circumstances; requiring clerks of the circuit
321 court to post electronic copies of the handbook on its
322 website and make the handbook available to certain
323 applicants; encouraging clerks of the circuit court to
324 provide a list of course providers and websites where
325 certain classes are available; amending s. 741.04,
326 F.S.; prohibiting the issuance of a marriage license
327 until petitioners verify that both parties have
328 obtained and read the Florida Healthy Marriage
329 Handbook or some other presentation of similar
330 information; providing an effective date.