

CHAPTER 99-225

House Bill No. 775

An act relating to civil actions; creating s. 40.50, F.S.; providing for instructions to juries after the jury is sworn in; providing for the taking of notes under certain circumstances; providing for written questions; providing for final instructions; amending s. 44.102, F.S.; requiring that the court require mediation in certain actions for monetary damages; amending s. 44.104, F.S.; providing for voluntary trial resolution upon the agreement of parties to a civil dispute; providing for the appointment and compensation of a trial resolution judge; providing guidelines for conducting a voluntary trial resolution; providing for enforcement and appeal; amending s. 57.105, F.S.; revising conditions for award of attorney's fees for presenting unsupported claims or defenses; authorizing damage awards against a party for unreasonable delay of litigation; authorizing the court to impose additional sanctions; amending s. 57.071, F.S.; providing criteria under which expert witness fees may be awarded as taxable costs; providing for expedited trials; amending s. 768.77, F.S.; deleting a requirement to itemize future damages on verdict forms; amending s. 768.78, F.S.; conforming provisions relating to alternative methods of payment of damage awards to changes made by the act; correcting a cross reference; creating s. 47.025, F.S.; providing that certain venue provisions in a contract for improvement to real property are void; specifying appropriate venue for actions against resident contractors, subcontractors, sub-subcontractors, and materialmen; requiring the clerk of courts to report certain information on negligence cases to the Office of the State Courts Administrator; amending s. 95.031, F.S.; imposing a 12-year statute of repose on actions brought to recover for harm caused by products with a specified expected useful life; exempting certain categories of products from the statute of repose; imposing variable repose periods based on specific warranties by the manufacturer; providing an exception for certain injuries; providing for tolling under particular circumstances; specifying the date by which certain actions must be brought or be otherwise barred by the statute of repose; amending s. 90.407, F.S.; providing limitations on the admissibility of subsequent remedial measures; providing exceptions; creating s. 768.1257, F.S.; requiring the finder of fact, in certain product defect actions, to consider circumstances that existed at the time of manufacture; creating s. 768.1256, F.S.; providing a government rules defense with respect to certain products liability actions; providing for rebuttable presumptions; providing an exception; creating s. 768.096, F.S.; providing an employer with a presumption against negligent hiring under specified conditions in an action for civil damages resulting from an intentional tort committed by an employee; amending s. 768.095, F.S.; revising the conditions under which an employer is immune from civil liability for disclosing information regarding an employee to a prospective employer; creating s. 768.0705, F.S.; providing a presumption against

liability for criminal acts for convenience business under specified conditions; amending s. 768.075, F.S.; delineating the duty owed to trespassers by a person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property; providing definitions; providing for the avoidance of liability to discovered and undiscovered trespassers under described circumstances; providing immunity from certain liability arising out of the attempt to commit or the commission of a felony; creating s. 768.36, F.S.; prohibiting a plaintiff from recovering damages if plaintiff is more than a specified percentage at fault due to the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs; creating s. 768.725, F.S.; providing for evidentiary standards for an award of punitive damages; amending s. 768.72, F.S.; revising provisions with respect to claims for punitive damages in civil actions; requiring clear and convincing evidence of gross negligence or intentional misconduct to support the recovery of such damages; providing definitions; providing criteria for the imposition of punitive damages with respect to employers, principals, corporations, or other legal entities for the conduct of an employee or agent; providing for the application of the section; amending s. 768.73, F.S.; revising provisions with respect to limitations on punitive damages; providing monetary limitations; providing for the effect of certain previous punitive damages awards; providing for the application of the section; creating s. 768.735, F.S.; providing that ss. 768.72(2)-(4), 768.725, and 768.73, F.S., relating to punitive damages, are inapplicable to specified causes of action; limiting the amount of punitive damages that may be awarded to a claimant in certain civil actions involving abuse or arising under ch. 400, F.S.; creating s. 768.736, F.S.; providing that ss. 768.725 and 768.73, F.S., relating to punitive damages, do not apply to intoxicated defendants; creating s. 768.737, F.S.; providing for application of punitive damages statutes to arbitration; amending s. 768.81, F.S.; providing for the apportionment of damages on the basis of joint and several liability when a party's fault exceeds certain percentages; limiting the applicability of joint and several liability based on the amount of damages; providing for the allocation of fault to a nonparty; requiring that such fault must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence; amending s. 324.021, F.S.; providing the lessor of a motor vehicle under certain rental agreements shall be deemed the owner of the vehicle for the purpose of determining liability for the operation of the vehicle within certain limits; providing for the liability of the owner of a motor vehicle who loans the vehicle to certain users; creating s. 768.098, F.S.; limiting the liability of employers in a joint employment relationship under specific circumstances; providing exceptions and limitations; amending s. 400.023, F.S., relating to actions brought on behalf of nursing home residents; providing that a party to any such action may not recover attorney's fees unless parties submit to mediation; specifying requirements for such mediation; providing for application; providing a standard for an award of punitive damages; amending s. 400.429, F.S.; relating to actions brought on behalf of assisted living care facility residents; providing that a party to any such action may not recover attorney's fees unless parties submit to medi-

ation; specifying requirements for such mediation; providing for application; providing a standard for an award of punitive damages; amending s. 400.629, F.S.; relating to actions brought on behalf of adult family care home residents; providing that a party to any such action may not recover attorney's fees unless parties submit to mediation; specifying requirements for such mediation; providing for application; providing a standard for an award of punitive damages; requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to contract with an actuarial firm to conduct an actuarial analysis of expected reductions in judgments and related costs resulting from litigation reforms; specifying the basis and due date for the actuarial report; providing a declaration of intent pertaining to the constitutional prerogatives of the judiciary; providing for severability; providing effective dates.

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

Section 1. Section 40.50, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

40.50 Jury duty and instructions in civil cases.—

(1) In any civil action immediately after the jury is sworn, the court shall instruct the jury concerning its duties, its conduct, the order of proceedings, the procedure for submitting written questions of witnesses, and the legal issues involved in the proceeding.

(2) In any civil action which the court determines is likely to exceed 5 days, the court shall instruct that the jurors may take notes regarding the evidence and keep the notes to refresh their memory and to use during recesses and deliberations. The court may provide materials suitable for this purpose. The court should emphasize the confidentiality of the notes. After the jury has rendered its verdict, any notes shall be collected by the bailiff or clerk who shall promptly destroy them.

(3) The court shall permit jurors to submit to the court written questions directed to witnesses or to the court. The court shall give counsel an opportunity to object to such questions outside the presence of the jury. The court may, as appropriate, limit the submission of questions to witnesses.

(4) The court shall instruct the jury that any questions directed to witnesses or the court must be in writing, unsigned, and given to the bailiff. If the court determines that the juror's question calls for admissible evidence, the question may be asked by court or counsel in the court's discretion. Such question may be answered by stipulation or other appropriate means, including, but not limited to, additional testimony upon such terms and limitations as the court prescribes. If the court determines that the juror's question calls for inadmissible evidence, the question shall not be read or answered. If the court rejects a juror's question, the court should tell the jury that trial rules do not permit some questions and that the jurors should not attach any significance to the failure of having their question asked.

(5) The court may give final instructions to the jury before closing arguments of counsel to enhance jurors' ability to apply the law to the facts. In

that event, the court may withhold giving the necessary procedural and housekeeping instructions until after closing arguments.

Section 2. Subsection (2) of section 44.102, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

44.102 Court-ordered mediation.—

(2) A court, under rules adopted by the Supreme Court:

(a) Must, upon request of one party, refer to mediation any filed civil action for monetary damages, provided the requesting party is willing and able to pay the costs of the mediation or the costs can be equitably divided between the parties, unless:

1. The action is a landlord and tenant dispute that does not include a claim for personal injury.

2. The action is filed for the purpose of collecting a debt.

3. The action is a claim of medical malpractice.

4. The action is governed by the Florida Small Claims Rules.

5. The court determines that the action is proper for referral to nonbinding arbitration under this chapter.

6. The parties have agreed to binding arbitration.

7. The parties have agreed to an expedited trial pursuant to section 6 of this act.

8. The parties have agreed to voluntary trial resolution pursuant to s. 44.104.

(b)(a) May refer to mediation all or any part of a filed civil action for which mediation is not required under this section.

(c)(b) In circuits in which a family mediation program has been established and upon a court finding of a dispute, shall refer to mediation all or part of custody, visitation, or other parental responsibility issues as defined in s. 61.13. Upon motion or request of a party, a court shall not refer any case to mediation if it finds there has been a history of domestic violence that would compromise the mediation process.

(d)(e) In circuits in which a dependency or in need of services mediation program has been established, may refer to mediation all or any portion of a matter relating to dependency or to a child in need of services or a family in need of services.

Section 3. Section 44.104, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

44.104 Voluntary binding arbitration and voluntary trial resolution.—

(1) Two or more opposing parties who are involved in a civil dispute may agree in writing to submit the controversy to voluntary binding arbitration, or voluntary trial resolution, in lieu of litigation of the issues involved, prior to or after a lawsuit has been filed, provided no constitutional issue is involved.

(2) If the parties have entered into an agreement which provides in voluntary binding arbitration for a method for appointing the appointment of one or more arbitrators, or which provides in voluntary trial resolution a method for appointing a member of The Florida Bar in good standing for more than 5 years to act as trial resolution judge, the court shall proceed with the appointment as prescribed, ~~except that~~. However, in voluntary binding arbitration at least one of the arbitrators, who shall serve as the chief arbitrator, shall meet the qualifications and training requirements adopted pursuant to s. 44.106. In the absence of an agreement, or if the agreement method fails or for any reason cannot be followed, the court, on application of a party, shall appoint one or more qualified arbitrators, or the trial resolution judge, as the case requires.

(3) The arbitrators or trial resolution judge shall be compensated by the parties according to their agreement, ~~but not at an amount less than \$75 per day~~.

(4) Within 10 days ~~after~~ of the submission of the request for binding arbitration, or voluntary trial resolution, the court shall provide for the appointment of the arbitrator or arbitrators, or trial resolution judge, as the case requires. Once appointed, the arbitrators or trial resolution judge shall notify the parties of the time and place for the hearing.

(5) Application for voluntary binding arbitration or voluntary trial resolution shall be filed and fees paid to the clerk of court as if for complaints initiating civil actions. The clerk of the court shall handle and account for these matters in all respects as if they were civil actions, except that the clerk of court shall keep separate the records of the applications for voluntary binding arbitration and the records of the applications for voluntary trial resolution from all other civil actions.

(6) Filing of the application for binding arbitration or voluntary trial resolution will toll the running of the applicable statutes of limitation.

(7) The chief arbitrator or trial resolution judge ~~may shall have such power to~~ administer oaths or affirmation and ~~to~~ conduct the proceedings as the rules of court shall provide. At the request of any party, the chief arbitrator or trial resolution judge shall issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and for the production of books, records, documents, and other evidence and may apply to the court for orders compelling attendance and production. Subpoenas shall be served and shall be enforceable in the manner provided by law.

(8) A voluntary binding arbitration ~~The~~ hearing shall be conducted by all of the arbitrators, but a majority may determine any question and render a final decision. A trial resolution judge shall conduct a voluntary trial

resolution hearing. The trial resolution judge may determine any question and render a final decision.

(9) The Florida Evidence Code shall apply to all proceedings under this section.

(10) An appeal of a voluntary binding arbitration decision shall be taken to the circuit court and shall be limited to review on the record and not de novo, of:

(a) Any alleged failure of the arbitrators to comply with the applicable rules of procedure or evidence.

(b) Any alleged partiality or misconduct by an arbitrator prejudicing the rights of any party.

(c) Whether the decision reaches a result contrary to the Constitution of the United States or of the State of Florida.

(11) Any party may enforce a final decision rendered in a voluntary trial by filing a petition for final judgment in the circuit court in the circuit in which the voluntary trial took place. Upon entry of final judgment by the circuit court, any party may appeal to the appropriate appellate court. Factual findings determined in the voluntary trial are not subject to appeal.

(12) The harmless error doctrine shall apply in all appeals. No further review shall be permitted unless a constitutional issue is raised.

(13)(14) If no appeal is taken within the time provided by rules promulgated by the Supreme Court, then the decision shall be referred to the presiding judge in the case, or if one has not been assigned, then to the chief judge of the circuit for assignment to a circuit judge, who shall enter such orders and judgments as are required to carry out the terms of the decision, which orders shall be enforceable by the contempt powers of the court and for which judgments execution shall issue on request of a party.

(14)(12) This section shall not apply to any dispute involving child custody, visitation, or child support, or to any dispute which involves the rights of a third party not a party to the arbitration or voluntary trial resolution when the third party would be an indispensable party if the dispute were resolved in court or when the third party notifies the chief arbitrator or the trial resolution judge that the third party would be a proper party if the dispute were resolved in court, that the third party intends to intervene in the action in court, and that the third party does not agree to proceed under this section.

Section 4. Section 57.105, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

57.105 Attorney's fee; sanctions for raising unsupported claims or defenses; damages for delay of litigation.—

(1) Upon the court's initiative or motion of any party, the court shall award a reasonable attorney's fee to be paid to the prevailing party in equal amounts by the losing party and the losing party's attorney on any claim or

defense at any time during a in any civil proceeding or action in which the court finds that the losing party or the losing party's attorney knew or should have known that a claim or defense when initially presented to the court or at any time before trial:

(a) Was not supported by the material facts necessary to establish the claim or defense; or

(b) Would not be supported by the application of then-existing law to those material facts. there was a complete absence of a justiciable issue of either law or fact raised by the complaint or defense of the losing party; provided,

However, ~~that the losing party's attorney is not personally responsible if he or she has acted in good faith, based on the representations of his or her client as to the existence of those material facts. If the court awards attorney's fees to a claimant pursuant to this subsection finds that there was a complete absence of a justiciable issue of either law or fact raised by the defense, the court shall also award prejudgment interest.~~

(2) Paragraph (1)(b) does not apply if the court determines that the claim or defense was initially presented to the court as a good faith argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law, as it applied to the material facts, with a reasonable expectation of success.

(3) At any time in any civil proceeding or action in which the moving party proves by a preponderance of the evidence that any action taken by the opposing party, including, but not limited to, the filing of any pleading or part thereof, the assertion of or response to any discovery demand, the assertion of any claim or defense, or the response to any request by any other party, was taken primarily for the purpose of unreasonable delay, the court shall award damages to the moving party for its reasonable expenses incurred in obtaining the order, which may include attorney's fees, and other loss resulting from the improper delay.

(4) The provisions of this section are supplemental to other sanctions or remedies available under law or under court rules.

(5)(2) If a contract contains a provision allowing attorney's fees to a party when he or she is required to take any action to enforce the contract, the court may also allow reasonable attorney's fees to the other party when that party prevails in any action, whether as plaintiff or defendant, with respect to the contract. This subsection applies to any contract entered into on or after October 1, 1988. This act shall take effect October 1, 1988, and shall apply to contracts entered into on said date or thereafter.

Section 5. Section 57.071, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

57.071 Costs; what taxable.—

(1) If costs are awarded to any party, the following shall also be allowed:

(a)(4) The reasonable premiums or expenses paid on all bonds or other security furnished by such party.

(b)(2) The expense of the court reporter for per diem, transcribing proceedings and depositions, including opening statements and arguments by counsel.

(c)(3) Any sales or use tax due on legal services provided to such party, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary.

(2) Expert witness fees may not be awarded as taxable costs unless the party retaining the expert witness furnishes each opposing party with a written report signed by the expert witness which summarizes the expert witness's opinions and the factual basis of the opinions, including documentary evidence and the authorities relied upon in reaching the opinions. Such report shall be filed at least 5 days prior to the deposition of the expert or at least 20 days prior to discovery cutoff, whichever is sooner, or as otherwise determined by the court. This subsection does not apply to any action proceeding under the Florida Family Law Rules of Procedure.

Section 6. Expedited trials.—Upon the joint stipulation of the parties to any civil case, the court may conduct an expedited trial as provided in this section. Where two or more plaintiffs or defendants have a unity of interest, such as a husband and wife, they shall be considered one party for the purpose of this section. Unless otherwise ordered by the court or agreed to by the parties with approval of the court, an expedited trial shall be conducted as follows:

(1) All discovery shall be completed within 60 days after the court enters an order adopting the joint expedited trial stipulation.

(2) All interrogatories and requests for production must be served within 10 days after the court enters the order adopting the joint expedited trial stipulation, and all responses must be served within 20 days after receipt.

(3) The court shall determine the number of depositions required.

(4) The case may be tried to a jury.

(5) The case may be tried within 30 days after the 60-day discovery cutoff, if such schedule would not impose an undue burden on the court calendar.

(6) The trial must be limited to 1 day.

(7) The jury selection must be limited to 1 hour.

(8) The plaintiff will have no more than 3 hours to present its case, including the opening, all testimony and evidence, and the closing.

(9) The defendant will have no more than 3 hours to present its case, including the opening, all testimony and evidence, and the closing.

(10) The jury may be given “plain language” jury instructions at the beginning of the trial as well as a “plain language” jury verdict form. The parties must agree to the jury instructions and verdict form.

(11) The parties may introduce a verified written report of any expert and an affidavit of the expert’s curriculum vitae instead of calling the expert to testify at trial.

(12) At trial the parties may use excerpts from depositions, including video depositions, regardless of where the deponent lives or whether the deponent is available to testify.

(13) Except as otherwise provided in this section, the Florida Evidence Code and the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure apply.

(14) The court may refuse to grant continuances of the trial absent extraordinary circumstances.

Section 7. Section 768.77, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

768.77 Itemized verdict.—

(4) In any action to which this part applies in which the trier of fact determines that liability exists on the part of the defendant, the trier of fact shall, as a part of the verdict, itemize the amounts to be awarded to the claimant into the following categories of damages:

(1)(a) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for economic losses;

(2)(b) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for noneconomic losses; and

(3)(c) Amounts awarded to the claimant for punitive damages, if applicable.

~~(2) Each category of damages, other than punitive damages, shall be further itemized into amounts intended to compensate for losses which have been incurred prior to the verdict and into amounts intended to compensate for losses to be incurred in the future. Future damages itemized under paragraph (1)(a) shall be computed before and after reduction to present value. Damages itemized under paragraph (1)(b) or paragraph (1)(c) shall not be reduced to present value. In itemizing amounts intended to compensate for future losses, the trier of fact shall set forth the period of years over which such amounts are intended to provide compensation.~~

Section 8. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 768.78, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

768.78 Alternative methods of payment of damage awards.—

(1)(a) In any action to which this part applies in which the court determines that trier of fact makes an award to compensate the claimant includes for future economic losses which exceed \$250,000, payment of amounts intended to compensate the claimant for these losses shall be made by one

of the following means, unless an alternative method of payment of damages is provided in this section:

1. The defendant may make a lump-sum payment for all damages so assessed, with future economic losses and expenses reduced to present value; or

2. Subject to the provisions of this subsection, the court shall, at the request of either party, unless the court determines that manifest injustice would result to any party, enter a judgment ordering future economic damages, as itemized pursuant to s. 768.77(1)(a), in excess of \$250,000 to be paid in whole or in part by periodic payments rather than by a lump-sum payment.

Section 9. Section 47.025, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

47.025 Actions against contractors.—Any venue provision in a contract for improvement to real property which requires legal action involving a resident contractor, subcontractor, sub-subcontractor, or materialman, as defined in part I of chapter 713, to be brought outside this state is void as a matter of public policy. To the extent that the venue provision in the contract is void under this section, any legal action arising out of that contract shall be brought only in this state in the county where the defendant resides, where the cause of action accrued, or where the property in litigation is located, unless, after the dispute arises, the parties stipulate to another venue.

Section 10. Through the state's uniform case reporting system, the clerk of court shall report to the Office of the State Courts Administrator, beginning in 2003, information from each settlement or jury verdict and final judgment in negligence cases as defined in section 768.81(4), Florida Statutes, as the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives deem necessary from time to time. The information shall include, but need not be limited to: the name of each plaintiff and defendant; the verdict; the percentage of fault of each; the amount of economic damages and noneconomic damages awarded to each plaintiff, identifying those damages that are to be paid jointly and severally and by which defendants; and the amount of any punitive damages to be paid by each defendant.

Section 11. Effective July 1, 1999, subsection (2) of section 95.031, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

95.031 Computation of time.—Except as provided in subsection (2) and in s. 95.051 and elsewhere in these statutes, the time within which an action shall be begun under any statute of limitations runs from the time the cause of action accrues.

(2)(a) ~~An action~~ Actions for products liability and fraud under s. 95.11(3) must be begun within the period prescribed in this chapter, with the period running from the time the facts giving rise to the cause of action were discovered or should have been discovered with the exercise of due diligence, instead of running from any date prescribed elsewhere in s. 95.11(3), but in any event an action for fraud under s. 95.11(3) must be begun within 12

years after the date of the commission of the alleged fraud, regardless of the date the fraud was or should have been discovered.

(b) An action for products liability under s. 95.11(3) must be begun within the period prescribed in this chapter, with the period running from the date that the facts giving rise to the cause of action were discovered, or should have been discovered with the exercise of due diligence, rather than running from any other date prescribed elsewhere in s. 95.11(3), except as provided within this subsection. Under no circumstances may a claimant commence an action for products liability, including a wrongful death action or any other claim arising from personal injury or property damage caused by a product, to recover for harm allegedly caused by a product with an expected useful life of 10 years or less, if the harm was caused by exposure to or use of the product more than 12 years after delivery of the product to its first purchaser or lessee who was not engaged in the business of selling or leasing the product or of using the product as a component in the manufacture of another product. All products, except those included within subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2., are conclusively presumed to have an expected useful life of 10 years or less.

1. Aircraft used in commercial or contract carrying of passengers or freight, vessels of more than 100 gross tons, railroad equipment used in commercial or contract carrying of passengers or freight, and improvements to real property, including elevators and escalators, are not subject to the statute of repose provided within this subsection.

2. Any product not listed in subparagraph 1., which the manufacturer specifically warranted, through express representation or labeling, as having an expected useful life exceeding 10 years, has an expected useful life commensurate with the time period indicated by the warranty or label. Under such circumstances, no action for products liability may be brought after the expected useful life of the product, or more than 12 years after delivery of the product to its first purchaser or lessee who was not engaged in the business of selling or leasing the product or of using the product as a component in the manufacture of another product, whichever is later.

3. With regard to those products listed in subparagraph 1., except for escalators, elevators, and improvements to real property, no action for products liability may be brought more than 20 years after delivery of the product to its first purchaser or lessor who was not engaged in the business of selling or leasing the product or of using the product as a component in the manufacture of another product. However, if the manufacturer specifically warranted, through express representation or labeling, that the product has an expected useful life exceeding 20 years, the repose period shall be the time period warranted in representations or label.

(c) The repose period prescribed in paragraph (b) does not apply if the claimant was exposed to or used the product within the repose period, but an injury caused by such exposure or use did not manifest itself until after expiration of the repose period.

(d) The repose period prescribed within paragraph (b) is tolled for any period during which the manufacturer through its officers, directors, part-

ners, or managing agents had actual knowledge that the product was defective in the manner alleged by the claimant and took affirmative steps to conceal the defect. Any claim of concealment under this section shall be made with specificity and must be based upon substantial factual and legal support. Maintaining the confidentiality of trade secrets does not constitute concealment under this section.

Section 12. (1) The amendments to section 95.031(2), Florida Statutes, made by this act shall apply to any action commenced on or after the effective date of that section, regardless of when the cause of action accrued, except that any action for products liability which would not have been barred under section 95.031(2), Florida Statutes, prior to the amendments to that section made by this act may be commenced before July 1, 2003, and, if it is not commenced by that date and is barred by the amendments to section 95.031(2), Florida Statutes, made by this act, it shall be barred.

(2) This section shall take effect July 1, 1999.

Section 13. Section 90.407, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

90.407 Subsequent remedial measures.—Evidence of measures taken after an injury or harm caused by an event, which measures if taken before the event it occurred would have made injury or harm the event less likely to occur, is not admissible to prove negligence, the existence of a product defect, or culpable conduct in connection with the event. This rule does not require the exclusion of evidence of subsequent remedial measures when offered for another purpose, such as proving ownership, control, or the feasibility of precautionary measures, if controverted, or impeachment.

Section 14. Section 768.1257, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.1257 State-of-the-art defense for products liability.—In an action based upon defective design, brought against the manufacturer of a product, the finder of fact shall consider the state of the art of scientific and technical knowledge and other circumstances that existed at the time of manufacture, not at the time of loss or injury.

Section 15. Section 768.1256, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.1256 Government rules defense.—

(1) In a product liability action brought against a manufacturer or seller for harm allegedly caused by a product, there is a rebuttable presumption that the product is not defective or unreasonably dangerous and the manufacturer or seller is not liable if, at the time the specific unit of the product was sold or delivered to the initial purchaser or user, the aspect of the product that allegedly caused the harm:

(a) Complied with federal or state codes, statutes, rules, regulations, or standards relevant to the event causing the death or injury;

(b) The codes, statutes, rules, regulations, or standards are designed to prevent the type of harm that allegedly occurred; and

(c) Compliance with the codes, statutes, rules, regulations, or standards is required as a condition for selling or distributing the product.

(2) In a product liability action as described in subsection (1), there is a rebuttable presumption that the product is defective or unreasonably dangerous and the manufacturer or seller is liable if the manufacturer or seller did not comply with the federal or state codes, statutes, rules, regulations, or standards which:

(a) Were relevant to the event causing the death or injury;

(b) Are designed to prevent the type of harm that allegedly occurred; and

(c) Require compliance as a condition for selling or distributing the product.

(3) This section does not apply to an action brought for harm allegedly caused by a drug that is ordered off the market or seized by the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

Section 16. Section 768.096, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.096 Employer presumption against negligent hiring.—

(1) In a civil action for the death of, or injury or damage to, a third person caused by the intentional tort of an employee, such employee's employer is presumed not to have been negligent in hiring such employee if, before hiring the employee, the employer conducted a background investigation of the prospective employee and the investigation did not reveal any information that reasonably demonstrated the unsuitability of the prospective employee for the particular work to be performed or for the employment in general. A background investigation under this section must include:

(a) Obtaining a criminal background investigation on the prospective employee under subsection (2);

(b) Making a reasonable effort to contact references and former employees of the prospective employee concerning the suitability of the prospective employee for employment;

(c) Requiring the prospective employee to complete a job application form that includes questions concerning whether he or she has ever been convicted of a crime, including details concerning the type of crime, the date of conviction and the penalty imposed, and whether the prospective employee has ever been a defendant in a civil action for intentional tort, including the nature of the intentional tort and the disposition of the action;

(d) Obtaining, with written authorization from the prospective employee, a check of the driver's license record of the prospective employee if such a check is relevant to the work the employee will be performing and if the record can reasonably be obtained; or

(e) Interviewing the prospective employee.

(2) To satisfy the criminal-background-investigation requirement of this section, an employer must request and obtain from the Department of Law Enforcement a check of the information as reported and reflected in the Florida Crime Information Center system as of the date of the request.

(3) The election by an employer not to conduct the investigation specified in subsection (1) does not raise any presumption that the employer failed to use reasonable care in hiring an employee.

Section 17. Section 768.095, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

~~768.095 Employer immunity from liability; disclosure of information regarding former or current employees.—An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee employee's job performance to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is presumed to be acting in good faith and, unless lack of good faith is shown by clear and convincing evidence, is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence. For purposes of this section, the presumption of good faith is rebutted upon a showing that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or deliberately misleading, was rendered with malicious purpose, or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under chapter 760.~~

Section 18. Section 768.0705, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.0705 Limitation on premises liability.—The owner or operator of a convenience business that substantially implements the applicable security measures listed in ss. 812.173 and 812.174 shall gain a presumption against liability in connection with criminal acts that occur on the premises and that are committed by third parties who are not employees or agents of the owner or operator of the convenience business.

Section 19. Section 768.075, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

~~768.075 Immunity from liability for injury to trespassers on real property.—~~

(1) A person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property, or an agent of such person or organization, shall not be held liable for any civil damages for death of or injury or damage to a trespasser upon the property resulting from or arising by reason of the trespasser's commission of the offense of trespass as described in s. 810.08 or s. 810.09, when such trespasser was under the influence of alcoholic beverages with a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 0.10 percent or higher, when such trespasser was under the influence of any chemical substance set forth in s. 877.111, when such trespasser was illegally under the influence of any substance controlled under chapter 893, or if the trespasser is affected by any of the aforesaid substances to the extent that her or his normal faculties are impaired. For the purposes of this section, voluntary intoxication or impediment of faculties by use of alcohol or any of the aforementioned substances shall not excuse a party bringing an action or on whose behalf an action is brought

from proving the elements of trespass. However, the person or organization owning or controlling the interest in real property shall not be immune from liability if gross negligence or ~~intentional willful and wanton~~ intentional willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such person or organization or agent thereof is a proximate cause of the death of or injury or damage to the trespasser.

(2) A person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property, or an agent of such person or organization, is not liable for any civil damages for the death of or injury or damage to any discovered or undiscovered trespasser, except as provided in paragraphs (3)(a), (b), and (c), and regardless of whether the trespasser was intoxicated or otherwise impaired.

(3)(a) As used in this subsection, the term:

1. "Invitation" means that the visitor entering the premises has an objectively reasonable belief that he or she has been invited or is otherwise welcome on that portion of the real property where injury occurs.

2. "Discovered trespasser" means a person who enters real property without invitation, either express or implied, and whose actual physical presence was detected, within 24 hours preceding the accident, by the person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property or to whose actual physical presence the person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property was alerted by a reliable source within 24 hours preceding the accident. The status of a person who enters real property shall not be elevated to that of an invitee, unless the person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property has issued an express invitation to enter the property or has manifested a clear intent to hold the property open to use by persons pursuing purposes such as those pursued by the person whose status is at issue.

3. "Undiscovered trespasser" means a person who enters property without invitation, either express or implied, and whose actual physical presence was not detected, within 24 hours preceding the accident, by the person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property.

(b) To avoid liability to undiscovered trespassers, a person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property must refrain from intentional misconduct that proximately causes injury to the undiscovered trespasser, but has no duty to warn of dangerous conditions. To avoid liability to discovered trespassers, a person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property must refrain from gross negligence or intentional misconduct that proximately causes injury to the discovered trespasser, and must warn the trespasser of dangerous conditions that are known to the person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property but that are not readily observable by others.

(c) This subsection shall not be interpreted or construed to alter the common law as it pertains to the "attractive nuisance doctrine."

(4) A person or organization owning or controlling an interest in real property, or an agent of such person or organization, shall not be held liable for negligence that results in the death of, injury to, or damage to a person

who is attempting to commit a felony or who is engaged in the commission of a felony on the property.

Section 20. Section 768.36, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.36 Alcohol or drug defense.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Alcoholic beverage” means distilled spirits and any beverage that contains 0.5 percent or more alcohol by volume as determined in accordance with s. 561.01(4)(b).

(b) “Drug” means any chemical substance set forth in s. 877.111 or any substance controlled under chapter 893. The term does not include any drug or medication obtained pursuant to a prescription as defined in s. 893.02 which was taken in accordance with the prescription, or any medication that is authorized under state or federal law for general distribution and use without a prescription in treating human diseases, ailments, or injuries and that was taken in the recommended dosage.

(2) In any civil action, a plaintiff may not recover any damages for loss or injury to his or her person or property if the trier of fact finds that, at the time the plaintiff was injured:

(a) The plaintiff was under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or drug to the extent that the plaintiff’s normal faculties were impaired or the plaintiff had a blood or breath alcohol level of 0.08 percent or higher; and

(b) As a result of the influence of such alcoholic beverage or drug the plaintiff was more than 50 percent at fault for his or her own harm.

Section 21. Section 768.725, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.725 Punitive damages; burden of proof.—In all civil actions, the plaintiff must establish at trial, by clear and convincing evidence, its entitlement to an award of punitive damages. The “greater weight of the evidence” burden of proof applies to a determination of the amount of damages.

Section 22. Section 768.72, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

768.72 Pleading in civil actions; claim for punitive damages.—

(1) In any civil action, no claim for punitive damages shall be permitted unless there is a reasonable showing by evidence in the record or proffered by the claimant which would provide a reasonable basis for recovery of such damages. The claimant may move to amend her or his complaint to assert a claim for punitive damages as allowed by the rules of civil procedure. The rules of civil procedure shall be liberally construed so as to allow the claimant discovery of evidence which appears reasonably calculated to lead to admissible evidence on the issue of punitive damages. No discovery of financial worth shall proceed until after the pleading concerning punitive damages is permitted.

(2) A defendant may be held liable for punitive damages only if the trier of fact, based on clear and convincing evidence, finds that the defendant was personally guilty of intentional misconduct or gross negligence. As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Intentional misconduct" means that the defendant had actual knowledge of the wrongfulness of the conduct and the high probability that injury or damage to the claimant would result and, despite that knowledge, intentionally pursued that course of conduct, resulting in injury or damage.

(b) "Gross negligence" means that the defendant's conduct was so reckless or wanting in care that it constituted a conscious disregard or indifference to the life, safety, or rights of persons exposed to such conduct.

(3) In the case of an employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity, punitive damages may be imposed for the conduct of an employee or agent only if the conduct of the employee or agent meets the criteria specified in subsection (2) and:

(a) The employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity actively and knowingly participated in such conduct;

(b) The officers, directors, or managers of the employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity knowingly condoned, ratified, or consented to such conduct; or

(c) The employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity engaged in conduct that constituted gross negligence and that contributed to the loss, damages, or injury suffered by the claimant.

(4) The provisions of this section shall be applied to all causes of action arising after the effective date of this act.

Section 23. Section 768.73, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

768.73 Punitive damages; limitation.—

(1)(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), an award of punitive damages may not exceed the greater of:

1. Three times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each claimant entitled thereto, consistent with the remaining provisions of this section; or

2. The sum of \$500,000. In any civil action based on negligence, strict liability, products liability, misconduct in commercial transactions, professional liability, or breach of warranty, and involving willful, wanton, or gross misconduct, the judgment for the total amount of punitive damages awarded to a claimant may not exceed three times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each person entitled thereto by the trier of fact, except as provided in paragraph (b). However, this subsection does not apply to any class action.

(b) Where the fact finder determines that the wrongful conduct proven under this section was motivated solely by unreasonable financial gain and determines that the unreasonably dangerous nature of the conduct, together with the high likelihood of injury resulting from the conduct, were actually known by the managing agent, director, officer, or other person responsible for making policy decisions on behalf of the defendant, it may award an amount of punitive damages not to exceed the greater of:

1. Four times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each claimant entitled thereto, consistent with the remaining provisions of this section; or

2. The sum of \$2,000,000. If any award for punitive damages exceeds the limitation specified in paragraph (a), the award is presumed to be excessive and the defendant is entitled to remittitur of the amount in excess of the limitation unless the claimant demonstrates to the court by clear and convincing evidence that the award is not excessive in light of the facts and circumstances which were presented to the trier of fact.

(c) Where the fact finder determines that at the time of injury the defendant had a specific intent to harm the claimant and determines that the defendant's conduct did in fact harm the claimant, there shall be no cap on punitive damages.

(d)(e) This subsection is not intended to prohibit an appropriate court from exercising its jurisdiction under s. 768.74 in determining the reasonableness of an award of punitive damages that is less than three times the amount of compensatory damages.

(2)(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), punitive damages may not be awarded against a defendant in a civil action if that defendant establishes, before trial, that punitive damages have previously been awarded against that defendant in any state or federal court in any action alleging harm from the same act or single course of conduct for which the claimant seeks compensatory damages. For purposes of a civil action, the term "the same act or single course of conduct" includes acts resulting in the same manufacturing defects, acts resulting in the same defects in design, or failure to warn of the same hazards, with respect to similar units of a product.

(b) In subsequent civil actions involving the same act or single course of conduct for which punitive damages have already been awarded, if the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that the amount of prior punitive damages awarded was insufficient to punish that defendant's behavior, the court may permit a jury to consider an award of subsequent punitive damages. In permitting a jury to consider awarding subsequent punitive damages, the court shall make specific findings of fact in the record to support its conclusion. In addition, the court may consider whether the defendant's act or course of conduct has ceased. Any subsequent punitive damage awards must be reduced by the amount of any earlier punitive damage awards rendered in state or federal court.

(3) The claimant attorney's fees, if payable from the judgment, are, to the extent that the fees are based on the punitive damages, calculated based on

the final judgment for punitive damages. This subsection does not limit the payment of attorney's fees based upon an award of damages other than punitive damages.

(4)(2) The jury may neither be instructed nor informed as to the provisions of this section.

(5) The provisions of this section shall be applied to all causes of action arising after the effective date of this act.

Section 24. Section 768.735, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.735 Punitive damages; exceptions; limitation.—

(1) Sections 768.72(2)-(4), 768.725, and 768.73 do not apply to any civil action based upon child abuse, abuse of the elderly, or abuse of the developmentally disabled or any civil action arising under chapter 400. Such actions are governed by applicable statutes and controlling judicial precedent.

(2)(a) In any civil action based upon child abuse, abuse of the elderly, or abuse of the developmentally disabled, or actions arising under chapter 400 and involving the award of punitive damages, the judgment for the total amount of punitive damages awarded to a claimant may not exceed three times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each person entitled thereto by the trier of fact, except as provided in paragraph (b). This subsection does not apply to any class action.

(b) If any award for punitive damages exceeds the limitation specified in paragraph (a), the award is presumed to be excessive and the defendant is entitled to remittitur of the amount in excess of the limitation unless the claimant demonstrates to the court by clear and convincing evidence that the award is not excessive in light of the facts and circumstances that were presented to the trier of fact.

(c) This subsection is not intended to prohibit an appropriate court from exercising its jurisdiction under s. 768.74 in determining the reasonableness of an award of punitive damages which is less than three times the amount of compensatory damages.

(d) The jury may not be instructed or informed as to the provisions of this section.

Section 25. Section 768.736, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.736 Punitive damages; exceptions for intoxication.—Sections 768.725 and 768.73 do not apply to any defendant who, at the time of the act or omission for which punitive damages are sought, was under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or drug to the extent that the defendant's normal faculties were impaired, or who had a blood or breath alcohol level of 0.08 percent or higher.

Section 26. Section 768.737, Florida statutes, is created to read:

768.737 Punitive damages; application in arbitration.—Where punitive damages are available as a remedy in an arbitration proceeding, ss. 768.72, 768.725, and 768.73 apply. When an award of punitive damages is made in an arbitration proceeding, the arbitrator who renders the award must issue a written opinion setting forth the conduct which gave rise to the award and how the arbitrator applied the standards in s. 768.72 to such conduct.

Section 27. Subsections (3), (4), (5), and (6) of section 768.81, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

768.81 Comparative fault.—

(3) APPORTIONMENT OF DAMAGES.—In cases to which this section applies, the court shall enter judgment against each party liable on the basis of such party's percentage of fault and not on the basis of the doctrine of joint and several liability, except as provided in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c):

(a) Where a plaintiff is found to be at fault, the following shall apply:

1. Any defendant found 10 percent or less at fault shall not be subject to joint and several liability.

2. For any defendant found more than 10 percent but less than 25 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$200,000.

3. For any defendant found at least 25 percent but not more than 50 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$500,000.

4. For any defendant found more than 50 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$1,000,000.

For any defendant under subparagraph 2., subparagraph 3., or subparagraph 4., the amount of economic damages calculated under joint and several liability shall be in addition to the amount of economic and noneconomic damages already apportioned to that defendant based on that defendant's percentage of fault.

(b) Where a plaintiff is found to be without fault, the following shall apply:

1. Any defendant found less than 10 percent at fault shall not be subject to joint and several liability.

2. For any defendant found at least 10 percent but less than 25 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$500,000.

3. For any defendant found at least 25 percent but not more than 50 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$1,000,000.

4. For any defendant found more than 50 percent at fault, joint and several liability shall not apply to that portion of economic damages in excess of \$2,000,000.

For any defendant under subparagraph 2., subparagraph 3., or subparagraph 4., the amount of economic damages calculated under joint and several liability shall be in addition to the amount of economic and noneconomic damages already apportioned to that defendant based on that defendant's percentage of fault.

(c) With respect to any defendant whose percentage of fault is less than the fault of a particular plaintiff, the doctrine of joint and several liability shall not apply to any damages imposed against the defendant. ; provided that with respect to any party whose percentage of fault equals or exceeds that of a particular claimant, the court shall enter judgment with respect to economic damages against that party on the basis of the doctrine of joint and several liability.

(d) In order to allocate any or all fault to a nonparty, a defendant must affirmatively plead the fault of a nonparty and, absent a showing of good cause, identify the nonparty, if known, or describe the nonparty as specifically as practicable, either by motion or in the initial responsive pleading when defenses are first presented, subject to amendment any time before trial in accordance with the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.

(e) In order to allocate any or all fault to a nonparty and include the named or unnamed nonparty on the verdict form for purposes of apportioning damages, a defendant must prove at trial, by a preponderance of the evidence, the fault of the nonparty in causing the plaintiff's injuries.

(4) APPLICABILITY.—

(a) This section applies to negligence cases. For purposes of this section, "negligence cases" includes, but is not limited to, civil actions for damages based upon theories of negligence, strict liability, products liability, professional malpractice whether couched in terms of contract or tort, or breach of warranty and like theories. In determining whether a case falls within the term "negligence cases," the court shall look to the substance of the action and not the conclusory terms used by the parties.

(b) This section does not apply to any action brought by any person to recover actual economic damages resulting from pollution, to any action based upon an intentional tort, or to any cause of action as to which application of the doctrine of joint and several liability is specifically provided by chapter 403, chapter 498, chapter 517, chapter 542, or chapter 895.

~~(5) APPLICABILITY OF JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY.—Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the doctrine of joint and several liability applies to all actions in which the total amount of damages does not exceed \$25,000.~~

~~(5)(6)~~ Notwithstanding anything in law to the contrary, in an action for damages for personal injury or wrongful death arising out of medical mal-

practice, whether in contract or tort, when an apportionment of damages pursuant to this section is attributed to a teaching hospital as defined in s. 408.07, the court shall enter judgment against the teaching hospital on the basis of such party's percentage of fault and not on the basis of the doctrine of joint and several liability.

Section 28. Effective July 1, 1999, paragraph (b) of subsection (9) of section 324.021, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (c) is added to that subsection, to read:

324.021 Definitions; minimum insurance required.—The following words and phrases when used in this chapter shall, for the purpose of this chapter, have the meanings respectively ascribed to them in this section, except in those instances where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

(9) OWNER; OWNER/LESSOR.—

(b) Owner/lessor.—Notwithstanding any other provision of the Florida Statutes or existing case law:;

1. The lessor, under an agreement to lease a motor vehicle for 1 year or longer which requires the lessee to obtain insurance acceptable to the lessor which contains limits not less than \$100,000/\$300,000 bodily injury liability and \$50,000 property damage liability or not less than \$500,000 combined property damage liability and bodily injury liability, shall not be deemed the owner of said motor vehicle for the purpose of determining financial responsibility for the operation of said motor vehicle or for the acts of the operator in connection therewith; further, this ~~subparagraph~~ paragraph shall be applicable so long as the insurance meeting these requirements is in effect. The insurance meeting such requirements may be obtained by the lessor or lessee, provided, if such insurance is obtained by the lessor, the combined coverage for bodily injury liability and property damage liability shall contain limits of not less than \$1 million and may be provided by a lessor's blanket policy.

2. The lessor, under an agreement to rent or lease a motor vehicle for a period of less than 1 year, shall be deemed the owner of the motor vehicle for the purpose of determining liability for the operation of the vehicle or the acts of the operator in connection therewith only up to \$100,000 per person and up to \$300,000 per incident for bodily injury and up to \$50,000 for property damage. If the lessee or the operator of the motor vehicle is uninsured or has any insurance with limits less than \$500,000 combined property damage and bodily injury liability, the lessor shall be liable for up to an additional \$500,000 in economic damages only arising out of the use of the motor vehicle. The additional specified liability of the lessor for economic damages shall be reduced by amounts actually recovered from the lessee, from the operator, and from any insurance or self-insurance covering the lessee or operator. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to affect the liability of the lessor for its own negligence.

3. The owner who is a natural person and loans a motor vehicle to any permissive user shall be liable for the operation of the vehicle or the acts of

the operator in connection therewith only up to \$100,000 per person and up to \$300,000 per incident for bodily injury and up to \$50,000 for property damage. If the permissive user of the motor vehicle is uninsured or has any insurance with limits less than \$500,000 combined property damage and bodily injury liability, the owner shall be liable for up to an additional \$500,000 in economic damages only arising out of the use of the motor vehicle. The additional specified liability of the owner for economic damages shall be reduced by amounts actually recovered from the permissive user and from any insurance or self-insurance covering the permissive user. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to affect the liability of the owner for his or her own negligence.

(c) Application.—

1. The limits on liability in subparagraphs (b)2. and (b)3. do not apply to an owner of motor vehicles that are used for commercial activity in the owner's ordinary course of business, other than a rental company that rents or leases motor vehicles. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "rental company" includes only an entity that is engaged in the business of renting or leasing motor vehicles to the general public and that rents or leases a majority of its motor vehicles to persons with no direct or indirect affiliation with the rental company. The term also includes a motor vehicle dealer that provides temporary replacement vehicles to its customers for up to 10 days.

2. Furthermore, with respect to commercial motor vehicles as defined in s. 627.732, the limits on liability in subparagraphs (b)2. and (b)3. do not apply if, at the time of the incident, the commercial motor vehicle is being used in the transportation of materials found to be hazardous for the purposes of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Authorization Act of 1994, as amended, 49 U.S.C. ss. 5101 et seq., and that is required pursuant to such act to carry placards warning others of the hazardous cargo, unless at the time of lease or rental either:

a. The lessee indicates in writing that the vehicle will not be used to transport materials found to be hazardous for the purposes of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Authorization Act of 1994, as amended, 49 U.S.C. ss. 5101 et seq.; or

b. The lessee or other operator of the commercial motor vehicle has in effect insurance with limits of at least \$5,000,000 combined property damage and bodily injury liability.

Section 29. Section 768.098, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

768.098 Limitation of liability for employee leasing.—

(1) An employer in a joint employment relationship pursuant to s. 468.520 shall not be liable for the tortious actions of another employer in that relationship, or for the tortious actions of any jointly employed employee under that relationship, provided that:

(a) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not authorize or direct the tortious action;

(b) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not have actual knowledge of the tortious conduct and fail to take appropriate action;

(c) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not have actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act nor actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which the tortious conduct arose or at which and from which a jointly employed employee worked, and that said control was assigned to the other employer under the contract;

(d) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section is expressly absolved in the written contract forming the joint employment relationship of control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act, and actual control over the portion of the job site at which or from which the tortious conduct arose or at which and from which the jointly employed employee worked, and that said control was assigned to the other employer under the contract; and

(e) Complaints, allegations, or incidents of any tortious misconduct or workplace safety violations, regardless of the source, are required to be reported to the employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section by all other joint employers under the written contract forming the joint employment relationship, and that the employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not fail to take appropriate action as a result of receiving any such report related to a jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act.

(2) An employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section shall not be presumed to have actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act, nor actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which that employee worked, based solely upon the fact that the employee at issue is a leased employee.

(3) This section shall not alter any responsibilities of the joint employer who has actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee and who has actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which the employee is employed, which arises from s. 768.096.

Section 30. Subsections (6), (7), and (8) are added to section 400.023, Florida Statutes, to read:

400.023 Civil enforcement.—

(6) To recover attorney's fees under this section, the following conditions precedent must be met:

(a) Within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion to a complaint brought under this section and before trial, the parties or their designated representatives shall meet in mediation to discuss the issues of liability and damages in accordance with this paragraph for the purpose of an early resolution of the matter.

1. Within 60 days after the filing of the responsive pleading or defensive motion, the parties shall:

a. Agree on a mediator. If the parties cannot agree on a mediator, the defendant shall immediately notify the court, which shall appoint a mediator within 10 days after such notice.

b. Set a date for mediation.

c. Prepare an order for the court that identifies the mediator, the scheduled date of the mediation, and other terms of the mediation. Absent any disagreement between the parties, the court may issue the order for the mediation submitted by the parties without a hearing.

2. The mediation must be concluded within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion. The date may be extended only by agreement of all parties subject to mediation under this subsection.

3. The mediation shall be conducted in the following manner:

a. Each party shall ensure that all persons necessary for complete settlement authority are present at the mediation.

b. Each party shall mediate in good faith.

4. All aspects of the mediation which are not specifically established by this subsection must be conducted according to the rules of practice and procedure adopted by the Supreme Court of this state.

(b) If the parties do not settle the case pursuant to mediation, the last offer of the defendant made at mediation shall be recorded by the mediator in a written report that states the amount of the offer, the date the offer was made in writing, and the date the offer was rejected. If the matter subsequently proceeds to trial under this section and the plaintiff prevails but is awarded an amount in damages, exclusive of attorney's fees, which is equal to or less than the last offer made by the defendant at mediation, the plaintiff is not entitled to recover any attorney's fees.

(c) This subsection applies only to claims for liability and damages and does not apply to actions for injunctive relief.

(d) This subsection applies to all causes of action that accrue on or after October 1, 1999.

(7) Discovery of financial information for the purpose of determining the value of punitive damages may not be had unless the plaintiff shows the court by proffer or evidence in the record that a reasonable basis exists to support a claim for punitive damages.

(8) In addition to any other standards for punitive damages, any award of punitive damages must be reasonable in light of the actual harm suffered by the resident and the egregiousness of the conduct that caused the actual harm to the resident.

Section 31. Section 400.429, Florida statutes, is amended to read:

400.429 Civil actions to enforce rights.—

(1) Any person or resident whose rights as specified in this part are violated shall have a cause of action against any facility owner, administrator, or staff responsible for the violation. The action may be brought by the resident or his or her guardian, or by a person or organization acting on behalf of a resident with the consent of the resident or his or her guardian, or by the personal representative of the estate of a deceased resident when the cause of death resulted from a violation of the decedent's rights, to enforce such rights. The action may be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction to enforce such rights and to recover actual damages, and punitive damages when malicious, wanton, or willful disregard of the rights of others can be shown. Any plaintiff who prevails in any such action may be entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees, costs of the action, and damages, unless the court finds that the plaintiff has acted in bad faith, with malicious purpose, and that there was a complete absence of a justiciable issue of either law or fact. A prevailing defendant may be entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to s. 57.105. The remedies provided in this section are in addition to and cumulative with other legal and administrative remedies available to a resident or to the agency.

(2) To recover attorney's fees under this section, the following conditions precedent must be met:

(a) Within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion to a complaint brought under this section and before trial, the parties or their designated representatives shall meet in mediation to discuss the issues of liability and damages in accordance with this paragraph for the purpose of an early resolution of the matter.

1. Within 60 days after the filing of the responsive pleading or defensive motion, the parties shall:

a. Agree on a mediator. If the parties cannot agree on a mediator, the defendant shall immediately notify the court, which shall appoint a mediator within 10 days after such notice.

b. Set a date for mediation.

c. Prepare an order for the court that identifies the mediator, the scheduled date of the mediation, and other terms of the mediation. Absent any disagreement between the parties, the court may issue the order for the mediation submitted by the parties without a hearing.

2. The mediation must be concluded within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion. The date may be extended only by agreement of all parties subject to mediation under this subsection.

3. The mediation shall be conducted in the following manner:

a. Each party shall ensure that all persons necessary for complete settlement authority are present at the mediation.

b. Each party shall mediate in good faith.

4. All aspects of the mediation which are not specifically established by this subsection must be conducted according to the rules of practice and procedure adopted by the Supreme Court of this state.

(b) If the parties do not settle the case pursuant to mediation, the last offer of the defendant made at mediation shall be recorded by the mediator in a written report that states the amount of the offer, the date the offer was made in writing, and the date the offer was rejected. If the matter subsequently proceeds to trial under this section and the plaintiff prevails but is awarded an amount in damages, exclusive of attorney's fees, which is equal to or less than the last offer made by the defendant at mediation, the plaintiff is not entitled to recover any attorney's fees.

(c) This subsection applies only to claims for liability and damages and does not apply to actions for injunctive relief.

(d) This subsection applies to all causes of action that accrue on or after October 1, 1999.

(3) Discovery of financial information for the purpose of determining the value of punitive damages may not be had unless the plaintiff shows the court by proffer or evidence in the record that a reasonable basis exists to support a claim for punitive damages.

(4) In addition to any other standards for punitive damages, any award of punitive damages must be reasonable in light of the actual harm suffered by the resident and the egregiousness of the conduct that caused the actual harm to the resident.

Section 32. Section 400.629, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:

400.629 Civil actions to enforce rights.—

(1) Any person or resident whose rights as specified in this part are violated has a cause of action against any adult family-care home, provider, or staff responsible for the violation. The action may be brought by the resident or the resident's guardian, or by a person or organization acting on behalf of a resident with the consent of the resident or the resident's guardian, to enforce the right. The action may be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction to enforce such rights and to recover actual damages, and punitive damages when malicious, wanton, or willful disregard of the rights of others can be shown. Any plaintiff who prevails in any such action is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees, costs of the action, and damages, unless the court finds that the plaintiff has acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose or that there was a complete absence of a justiciable issue of either law or fact. A prevailing defendant is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to s. 57.105. The remedies provided in this section are in addition to other legal and administrative remedies available to a resident or to the agency.

(2) To recover attorney's fees under this section, the following conditions precedent must be met:

(a) Within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion to a complaint brought under this section and before trial, the parties or their designated representatives shall meet in mediation to discuss the issues of liability and damages in accordance with this paragraph for the purpose of an early resolution of the matter.

1. Within 60 days after the filing of the responsive pleading or defensive motion, the parties shall:

a. Agree on a mediator. If the parties cannot agree on a mediator, the defendant shall immediately notify the court, which shall appoint a mediator within 10 days after such notice.

b. Set a date for mediation.

c. Prepare an order for the court that identifies the mediator, the scheduled date of the mediation, and other terms of the mediation. Absent any disagreement between the parties, the court may issue the order for the mediation submitted by the parties without a hearing.

2. The mediation must be concluded within 120 days after the filing of a responsive pleading or defensive motion. The date may be extended only by agreement of all parties subject to mediation under this subsection.

3. The mediation shall be conducted in the following manner:

a. Each party shall ensure that all persons necessary for complete settlement authority are present at the mediation.

b. Each party shall mediate in good faith.

4. All aspects of the mediation which are not specifically established by this subsection must be conducted according to the rules of practice and procedure adopted by the Supreme Court of this state.

(b) If the parties do not settle the case pursuant to mediation, the last offer of the defendant made at mediation shall be recorded by the mediator in a written report that states the amount of the offer, the date the offer was made in writing, and the date the offer was rejected. If the matter subsequently proceeds to trial under this section and the plaintiff prevails but is awarded an amount in damages, exclusive of attorney's fees, which is equal to or less than the last offer made by the defendant at mediation, the plaintiff is not entitled to recover any attorney's fees.

(c) This subsection applies only to claims for liability and damages and does not apply to actions for injunctive relief.

(d) This subsection applies to all causes of action that accrue on or after October 1, 1999.

(3) Discovery of financial information for the purpose of determining the value of punitive damages may not be had unless the plaintiff shows the

court by proffer or evidence in the record that a reasonable basis exists to support a claim for punitive damages.

(4) In addition to any other standards for punitive damages, any award of punitive damages must be reasonable in light of the actual harm suffered by the resident and the egregiousness of the conduct that caused the actual harm to the resident.

Section 33. (1) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability shall, after issuing a request for proposals, contract with a national independent actuarial firm to conduct an actuarial analysis, consistent with generally accepted actuarial practices, of the expected reduction in liability judgments, settlements, and related costs resulting from the provisions of this act. The analysis shall be based on credible loss cost data derived from settlement or adjudication of liability claims accruing after the effective date of this act. The analysis shall include an estimate of the percentage decrease in such judgments, settlements, and costs by type of coverage affected by this act, including the time period when such savings or reductions are expected.

(2) The report shall be completed and submitted to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability by March 1, 2007.

Section 34. It is the intent of this act and the Legislature to accord the utmost comity and respect to the constitutional prerogatives of Florida's judiciary, and nothing in this act should be construed as any effort to impinge upon those prerogatives. To that end, should any court of competent jurisdiction enter a final judgment concluding or declaring that any provision of this act improperly encroaches upon the authority of the Florida Supreme Court to determine the rules of practice and procedure in Florida courts, the Legislature hereby declares its intent that any such provision be construed as a request for rule change pursuant to s. 2, Art. 5 of the State Constitution and not as a mandatory legislative directive.

Section 35. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are declared severable.

Section 36. Except as otherwise provided herein, this act shall take effect October 1, 1999.

Approved by the Governor May 26, 1999.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 26, 1999.