

Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 3345

An act relating to regulation of wrecker operators and persons immobilizing vehicles; amending s. 1.01, F.S.; defining the term “wrecker operator”; providing for a law enforcement officer to place a hold order on a motor vehicle in a wrecker operator’s storage facility; prescribing conditions on such acts; authorizing county and municipal wrecker operator systems; prohibiting certain acts in contravention of such systems; providing penalties; amending ss. 125.0103 and 166.043, F.S.; providing that counties must establish maximum fees which may be charged for the towing or immobilization of vehicles; amending s. 316.193, F.S.; providing that the vehicle to be impounded or immobilized need not be the vehicle involved in the D.U.I., but must be a vehicle owned, leased, or rented by the offender; providing that the D.U.I. offender will bear all costs and fees of impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle, including cost of notification; amending s. 321.051, F.S.; amending s. 320.08, F.S.; providing for certain license taxes to apply to wreckers used to tow vessels; amending s. 320.04, F.S.; providing a service charge for validation stickers issued by printer dispenser machines; revising provisions authorizing the Florida Highway Patrol to establish a wrecker operator system; prohibiting certain acts in contravention of such system; providing penalties; amending s. 322.34, F.S.; revising provisions relating to impoundment or immobilization of vehicles being operated while the operator’s license is suspended, revoked, canceled, or disqualified; providing for payment of accrued charges; amending s. 713.78, F.S.; providing that law allowing a lien for recovering, towing, or storing a vehicle or vessel does not authorize a lien for immobilizing a vehicle or vessel; creating a procedure for liens for towing and storage charges on undocumented vessels in the same manner as currently permitted for vehicles; providing liability for damages or theft in connection with a towed vehicle or vessel; amending s. 319.30, F.S.; conforming a cross reference; amending s. 316.193; providing for impoundment or immobilization of a vehicle; providing circumstances for dismissal of the impoundment or immobilization order; amending s. 327.35, F.S.; providing for impoundment or immobilization of a vessel; providing circumstances for dismissal of a court’s impoundment or immobilization order; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (15) is added to section 1.01, Florida Statutes, to read:

1.01 Definitions.—In construing these statutes and each and every word, phrase, or part hereof, where the context will permit:

(15) The term “wrecker operator” means any person or firm regularly engaged for hire in the business of towing or removing motor vehicles.

Section 2. Wrecker operator storage facilities; vehicle holds.—

(1) An investigating agency may place a hold on a motor vehicle stored within a wrecker operator’s storage facility for a period not to exceed 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, unless extended in writing.

(2) The investigating agency must notify the wrecker operator in writing within 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, whether the hold is to be continued. If no notification follows this period of time the wrecker operator may release the vehicle to the designated person pursuant to s. 713.78, Florida Statutes.

(a) If the hold is to continue beyond 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, the investigating agency may have the vehicle removed to a designated impound lot, in which event, the vehicle will not be released by the investigating agency to the owner or lienholder of the vehicle until proof of payment of the towing and storage charges incurred by the wrecker operator is presented to the investigating agency.

(b) If the investigating agency chooses to have the vehicle remain at the wrecker operator’s storage facility beyond 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, pursuant to the written notification, the investigating agency shall be responsible for payment of the storage charges incurred by the wrecker operator for the requested extended period. In such an event, the owner or lienholder shall be responsible for payment of accrued towing and storage charges for the first 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, or any period less than the first 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends, when the investigating agency either moves the vehicle from the wrecker operator’s storage facility to a designated impound lot or provides written notification to extend the hold on the vehicle prior to the expiration of the 5 days, excluding holidays and weekends.

(c) The towing and storage rates for the owner or lienholder of the held vehicle shall not exceed the rates for the investigating agency.

(3) If there is a judicial finding of no probable cause for having continued the immobilization or impoundment, the investigating agency ordering the hold must pay the accrued charges for any towing and storage.

(4) The requirements for a written hold applies when the following conditions are present:

(a) The officer has probable cause to believe the vehicle should be seized and forfeited under the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act, ss. 932.701-932.704, Florida Statutes;

(b) The officer has probable cause to believe the vehicle should be seized and forfeited under s. 372.312, Florida Statutes;

(c) The officer has probable cause to believe the vehicle was used as the means of committing a crime;

(d) The officer has probable cause to believe that the vehicle is itself evidence that tends to show that a crime has been committed or that the vehicle contains evidence, which cannot readily be removed, which tends to show that a crime has been committed;

(e) The officer has probable cause to believe the vehicle was involved in a traffic accident resulting in death or personal injury and should be sealed for investigation and collection of evidence by a vehicular homicide investigator;

(f) The vehicle is impounded or immobilized pursuant to s. 316.193 or s. 322.34, Florida Statutes; or

(g) The officer is complying with a court order.

(4) The hold must be in writing and must specify:

(a) The name and agency of the law enforcement officer placing the hold on the vehicle;

(b) The date and time the hold is placed on the vehicle;

(c) A general description of the vehicle including its color, make, model, body style, and year; VIN (Vehicle Identification Number); registration license plate number, state, and year; and validation sticker number, state, and year;

(d) The specific reason for placing the hold;

(e) The condition of the vehicle;

(f) The location where the vehicle is being held; and

(g) The name, address, and telephone number of the wrecker operator and the storage facility.

(5) A wrecker operator's storage facility must comply with a hold placed by a law enforcement officer, including instructions for inside or outside storage. A wrecker operator's storage facility may not release a motor vehicle subject to a hold to any person except as directed by the law enforcement agency placing the hold.

(6) When a vehicle owner is found guilty of, or pleads nolo contendere to, the offense that resulted in a hold being placed on his or her vehicle, regardless of the adjudication of guilt, the owner must pay the accrued towing and storage charges assessed against the vehicle.

Section 3. County and municipal wrecker operator systems; penalties for operation outside of system.—

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

(a) "Authorized wrecker operator" means any wrecker operator who has been designated as part of the wrecker operator system established by the

governmental unit having jurisdiction over the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle.

(b) “Unauthorized wrecker operator” means any wrecker operator who has not been designated as part of the wrecker operator system established by the governmental unit having jurisdiction over the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle.

(c) “Wrecker operator system” means a system for the towing or removal of wrecked, disabled, or abandoned vehicles, similar to the Florida Highway Patrol wrecker operator system described in s. 321.051(2), Florida Statutes, under which a county or municipality contracts with one or more wrecker operators for the towing or removal of wrecked, disabled, or abandoned vehicles from accident scenes, streets, or highways. A wrecker operator system shall include using a method for apportioning the towing assignments among the eligible wrecker operators through the creation of geographic zones, a rotation schedule, or a combination of these methods.

(2) In any county or municipality that operates a wrecker operator system:

(a) It is unlawful for an unauthorized wrecker operator or its employees or agents to monitor police radio for communications between patrol field units and the dispatcher in order to determine the location of a wrecked or disabled vehicle for the purpose of driving by the scene of such vehicle in a manner described in paragraph (b) or paragraph (c). Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a noncriminal violation, punishable as provided in s. 775.083, Florida Statutes.

(b) It is unlawful for an unauthorized wrecker operator to drive by the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle before the arrival of an authorized wrecker operator, initiate contact with the owner or operator of such vehicle by soliciting or offering towing services, and tow such vehicle. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, Florida Statutes.

(c) When an unauthorized wrecker operator drives by the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle and the owner or operator initiates contact by signaling the wrecker operator to stop and provide towing services, the unauthorized wrecker operator must disclose to the owner or operator of the vehicle that he or she is not the authorized wrecker operator who has been designated as part of the wrecker operator system and must disclose, in writing, what charges for towing and storage will apply before the vehicle is connected to the towing apparatus. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, Florida Statutes.

(d) At the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle, it is unlawful for a wrecker operator to falsely identify himself or herself as being part of the wrecker operator system. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083, Florida Statutes.

(3) This section does not prohibit, or in any way prevent, the owner or operator of a vehicle involved in an accident or otherwise disabled from contacting any wrecker operator for the provision of towing services, whether the wrecker operator is an authorized wrecker operator or not.

Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 125.0103, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (c) is added to said subsection, to read:

125.0103 Ordinances and rules imposing price controls; findings required; procedures.—

(1)(a) Except as hereinafter provided, no county, municipality, or other entity of local government shall adopt or maintain in effect an ordinance or a rule which has the effect of imposing price controls upon a lawful business activity which is not franchised by, owned by, or under contract with, the governmental agency, unless specifically provided by general law.

(b) The provisions of this section shall not prevent the enactment by local governments of public service rates otherwise authorized by law, including water, sewer, solid waste, public transportation, taxicab, ~~towing of vehicles from or immobilization of vehicles on private property, removal and storage of wrecked or disabled vehicles from an accident scene or for the removal and storage of vehicles, in the event the owner or operator is incapacitated, unavailable, leaves the procurement of wrecker service to the law enforcement officer at the scene, or otherwise does not consent to the removal of the vehicle, or port rates.~~

(c) Counties must establish maximum fees which may be charged on the towing of vehicles from or immobilization of vehicles on private property, removal and storage of wrecked or disabled vehicles from an accident scene or for the removal and storage of vehicles, in the event the owner or operator is incapacitated, unavailable, leaves the procurement of wrecker service to the law enforcement officer at the scene, or otherwise does not consent to the removal of the vehicle.

Section 5. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 166.043, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (c) is added to said subsection, to read:

166.043 Ordinances and rules imposing price controls; findings required; procedures.—

(1)(a) Except as hereinafter provided, no county, municipality, or other entity of local government shall adopt or maintain in effect an ordinance or a rule which has the effect of imposing price controls upon a lawful business activity which is not franchised by, owned by, or under contract with, the governmental agency, unless specifically provided by general law.

(b) The provisions of this section shall not prevent the enactment by local governments of public service rates otherwise authorized by law, including water; sewer; solid waste; public transportation; taxicab; ~~towing of vehicles from or immobilization of vehicles on private property; removal and storage of wrecked or disabled vehicles from an accident scene or for the removal and storage of vehicles, in the event the owner or operator is incapacitated,~~

unavailable, leaves the procurement of wrecker service to the law enforcement officer at the scene, or otherwise does not consent to the removal of the vehicle; or port rates.

(c) Counties must establish maximum fees which may be charged on the towing of vehicles from or immobilization of vehicles on private property, removal and storage of wrecked or disabled vehicles from an accident scene or for the removal and storage of vehicles, in the event the owner or operator is incapacitated, unavailable, leaves the procurement of wrecker service to the law enforcement officer at the scene, or otherwise does not consent to the removal of the vehicle.

Section 6. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section 316.193, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

316.193 Driving under the influence; penalties.—

(6) With respect to any person convicted of a violation of subsection (1), regardless of any penalty imposed pursuant to subsection (2), subsection (3), or subsection (4):

(d) In addition to the penalty imposed under paragraph (a), paragraph (b), or paragraph (c), the court shall also order the impoundment or immobilization of a vehicle owned, leased, or rented by ~~the vehicle that was driven by, or in the actual physical control of, the offender, unless the court finds that the family of the owner of the vehicle has no other public or private means of transportation.~~ The period of impoundment or immobilization is 10 days, or, for the second conviction within 3 years, 30 days, or, for the third conviction within 5 years, 90 days and may not be concurrent with probation or imprisonment. If the vehicle is leased or rented, the period of impoundment or immobilization may not extend beyond the expiration of the lease or rental agreement. Within 7 business days after the date that the court issues the order of impoundment or immobilization, the clerk of the court shall send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to ~~the registered owner of the vehicle if the registered owner is a person other than the offender and to each person of record claiming a lien against the~~ immobilized or impounded vehicle. All costs and fees for the impoundment or immobilization, including the cost of notification, must be paid by the ~~offender owner of the vehicle or, if the vehicle is leased or rented, by the person leasing or renting the vehicle.~~ The person who owns a vehicle that is impounded or immobilized under this paragraph, or a person who has a lien of record against such a vehicle, may, within 10 days after the date that person has knowledge of the location of the vehicle, file a complaint in the county in which the owner resides to determine whether the vehicle was wrongfully taken or withheld from the owner or lienholder. Upon the filing of a complaint, the owner or lienholder may have the vehicle released by posting with the court a bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the costs and fees for impoundment or immobilization, including towing or storage, to ensure the payment of such costs and fees if the owner or lienholder does not prevail. When the bond is posted and the fee is paid as set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate releasing the vehicle. At the time of release, after reasonable inspection, the owner or lienholder

must give a receipt to the towing or storage company indicating any loss or damage to the vehicle or to the contents of the vehicle.

For the purposes of this section, any conviction for a violation of s. 327.35; a previous conviction for the violation of former s. 316.1931, former s. 860.01, or former s. 316.028; or a previous conviction outside this state for driving under the influence, driving while intoxicated, driving with an unlawful blood-alcohol level, driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level, or any other similar alcohol-related or drug-related traffic offense, is also considered a previous conviction for violation of this section. However, in satisfaction of the fine imposed pursuant to this section, the court may, upon a finding that the defendant is financially unable to pay either all or part of the fine, order that the defendant participate for a specified additional period of time in public service or a community work project in lieu of payment of that portion of the fine which the court determines the defendant is unable to pay. In determining such additional sentence, the court shall consider the amount of the unpaid portion of the fine and the reasonable value of the services to be ordered; however, the court may not compute the reasonable value of services at a rate less than the federal minimum wage at the time of sentencing.

Section 7. Paragraphs (d) and (e) of subsection (5) of section 320.08, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

320.08 License taxes.—Except as otherwise provided herein, there are hereby levied and imposed annual license taxes for the operation of motor vehicles, mopeds, motorized bicycles as defined in s. 316.003(2), and mobile homes, as defined in s. 320.01, which shall be paid to and collected by the department or its agent upon the registration or renewal of registration of the following:

(5) SEMITRAILERS, FEES ACCORDING TO GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT; SCHOOL BUSES; SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLES.—

(d) A wrecker, as defined in s. 320.01(40), which is used to tow a vessel as defined in s. 327.02(36), a disabled, abandoned, stolen-recovered, or impounded motor vehicle as defined in s. 320.01(38),₁ or a replacement motor vehicle as defined in s. 320.01(39): \$30 flat.

(e) A wrecker, as defined in s. 320.01(40), which is used to tow any motor vehicle, regardless of whether or not such motor vehicle is a disabled motor vehicle as defined in s. 320.01(38), ~~or~~ a replacement motor vehicle as defined in s. 320.01(39), a vessel as defined in s. 327.02(36), or any other cargo, as follows:

1. Gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds or more, but less than 15,000 pounds: \$87 flat.

2. Gross vehicle weight of 15,000 pounds or more, but less than 20,000 pounds: \$131 flat.

3. Gross vehicle weight of 20,000 pounds or more, but less than 26,000 pounds: \$186 flat.

4. Gross vehicle weight of 26,000 pounds or more, but less than 35,000 pounds: \$240 flat.
5. Gross vehicle weight of 35,000 pounds or more, but less than 44,000 pounds: \$300 flat.
6. Gross vehicle weight of 44,000 pounds or more, but less than 55,000 pounds: \$572 flat.
7. Gross vehicle weight of 55,000 pounds or more, but less than 62,000 pounds: \$678 flat.
8. Gross vehicle weight of 62,000 pounds or more, but less than 72,000 pounds: \$800 flat.
9. Gross vehicle weight of 72,000 pounds or more: \$979 flat.

Section 8. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 320.04, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

320.04 Registration service charge.—

(1)(a) There shall be a service charge of \$2.50 for each application which is handled in connection with original issuance, duplicate issuance, or transfer of any license plate, mobile home sticker, or validation sticker or with transfer or duplicate issuance of any registration certificate. There may also be a service charge of up to \$1 for the issuance of each license plate validation sticker and mobile home sticker issued from an automated vending facility or printer dispenser machine which shall be payable to and retained by the department to provide for automated vending facilities or printer dispenser machines used to dispense such stickers by ~~in~~ each tax collector's or license tag agent's employee office.

Section 9. Section 321.051, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

321.051 Florida Highway Patrol A wrecker operator system; penalties for operation outside of system for removal and storage of wrecked, disabled, or abandoned vehicles.—

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

(a) “Authorized wrecker operator” means any wrecker operator who has been designated by the Division of Florida Highway Patrol as part of the wrecker operator system.

(b) “Unauthorized wrecker operator” means any wrecker operator who has not been designated by the division as part of the wrecker operator system.

(2) The Division of Florida Highway Patrol of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles is authorized to establish within areas designated by the patrol a wrecker operator system using ~~utilizing~~ qualified, reputable wrecker operators for removal and storage of wrecked or disabled vehicles from an accident scene or for removal and storage of abandoned

vehicles, in the event the owner or operator is incapacitated or unavailable or leaves the procurement of wrecker service to the officer at the scene. All reputable wrecker operators shall be eligible for use in the system provided their equipment and drivers meet recognized safety qualifications and mechanical standards set by rules of the Division of Florida Highway Patrol for the size of vehicle it is designed to handle. The division is authorized to limit the number of wrecker operators participating in the wrecker operator system, which authority shall not affect wrecker operators currently participating in the system established by this section. The division is authorized to establish maximum rates for the towing and storage of vehicles removed at the division's request, where such rates have not been set by a county or municipality pursuant to s. 125.0103 or s. 166.043. Such rates shall not be considered rules for the purpose of chapter 120; however, the department shall establish by rule a procedure for setting such rates. Any provision in chapter 120 to the contrary notwithstanding, a final order of the department denying, suspending, or revoking a wrecker operator's participation in the system shall be reviewable in the manner and within the time provided by the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure only by a writ of certiorari issued by the circuit court in the county wherein such wrecker operator resides shall reside.

(3)(a) It is unlawful for an unauthorized wrecker operator or its employees or agents to monitor police radio for communications between patrol field units and the dispatcher in order to determine the location of a wrecked or disabled vehicle for the purpose of driving by the scene of such vehicle in a manner described in paragraph (b) or paragraph (c). Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a noncriminal violation, punishable as provided in s. 775.083.

(b) It is unlawful for an unauthorized wrecker operator to drive by the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle before the arrival of the authorized wrecker operator, initiate contact with the owner or operator of such vehicle by soliciting or offering towing services, and tow such vehicle. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(c) When an unauthorized wrecker operator drives by the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle and the owner or operator initiates contact by signaling the wrecker operator to stop and provide towing services, the unauthorized wrecker operator must disclose to the owner or operator of the vehicle that he or she is not an authorized wrecker operator who has been designated as part of the wrecker operator system and must disclose, in writing, what charges for towing and storage will apply before the vehicle is connected to the towing apparatus. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(d) At the scene of a wrecked or disabled vehicle, it is unlawful for a wrecker operator to falsely identify himself or herself as being part of the wrecker operator system. Any person who violates this paragraph is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(4) This section does not prohibit, or in any way prevent, the owner or operator of a vehicle involved in an accident or otherwise disabled from contacting any wrecker operator for the provision of towing services, whether the wrecker operator is an authorized wrecker operator or not.

Section 10. Paragraphs (d) and (f) of subsection (8) of section 322.34, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

322.34 Driving while license suspended, revoked, canceled, or disqualified.—

(8)

(d) Either the arresting agency or the towing service, whichever is in possession of the vehicle, shall determine whether any vehicle impounded or immobilized under this section has been leased or rented or if there are any persons of record with a lien upon the vehicle. Either the arresting agency or the towing service, whichever is in possession of the vehicle, shall notify by express courier service with receipt or certified mail, return receipt requested, within 7 business days after the date of the immobilization or impoundment of the vehicle, the registered owner and all persons having a recorded lien against the vehicle ~~telephone any lessor or lienholder before 5 p.m. on the business day after the day that the vehicle has been impounded or immobilized.~~ A lessor, rental car company, or lienholder may then obtain the vehicle, upon payment of any lawful towing or storage charges. If the vehicle is a rental vehicle subject to a written contract, the charges may be separately charged to the renter, in addition to the rental rate, along with other separate fees, charges, and recoupments disclosed on the rental agreement. If the storage facility fails to provide timely notice to a lessor, rental car company, or lienholder as required by this paragraph, the storage facility shall be responsible for payment of any towing or storage charges necessary to release the vehicle to a lessor, rental car company, or lienholder that accrue after the notice period, which charges may then be assessed against the driver of the vehicle if the vehicle was lawfully impounded or immobilized.

(f) The owner of a vehicle that is impounded or immobilized under this subsection may, within 10 days after the date the owner has knowledge of the location of the vehicle, file a complaint in the county in which the owner resides to determine whether the vehicle was wrongfully taken or withheld. Upon the filing of a complaint, the owner may have the vehicle released by posting with the court a bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the costs and fees for impoundment or immobilization, including towing or storage, to ensure the payment of such costs and fees if the owner does not prevail. When the vehicle owner does not prevail on a complaint that the vehicle was wrongfully taken or withheld, he or she must pay the accrued charges for the immobilization or impoundment, including any towing and storage charges assessed against the vehicle. When the bond is posted and the fee is paid as set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate releasing the vehicle. At the time of release, after reasonable inspection, the owner must give a receipt to the towing or storage company indicating any loss or damage to the vehicle or to the contents of the vehicle.

Section 11. Section 713.78, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

713.78 Liens for recovering, towing, or storing vehicles and undocumented vessels.—

(1) For the purposes of this section, the term:

(a) “Vehicle” means any mobile item, whether motorized or not, which is mounted on wheels.

(b) “Vessel” has the same meaning as the term “undocumented vessel” as defined in s. 327.02(36).

(c)(b) “Wrecker” means any truck or other vehicle which is used to tow, carry, or otherwise transport motor vehicles or vessels upon the streets and highways of this state and which is equipped for that purpose with a boom, winch, car carrier, or other similar equipment.

(2) Whenever a person regularly engaged in the business of transporting vehicles or vessels by wrecker, tow truck, or car carrier recovers, removes, or stores a vehicle, vessel, or mobile home upon instructions from:

(a) The owner thereof; or

(b) The owner or lessor, or a person authorized by the owner or lessor, of property on which such vehicle is wrongfully parked, and such removal is done in compliance with s. 715.07; or

(c) Any law enforcement agency; or

(d) A mobile home park owner as defined in s. 723.003 who has a current writ of possession for a mobile home lot pursuant to s. 723.061,

she or he shall have a lien on such vehicle or vessel for a reasonable towing fee and for a reasonable storage fee; except that no storage fee shall be charged if such vehicle is stored for less than 6 hours.

(3) This section does not authorize any person to claim a lien on a vehicle for fees or charges connected with the immobilization of such vehicle using a vehicle boot or other similar device pursuant to s. 715.07.

(4)(a)(3)(a) Any person regularly engaged in the business of recovering, towing, or storing vehicles or vessels who comes into possession of a vehicle or vessel pursuant to subsection (2), and who claims a lien for recovery, towing, or storage services, shall give notice to the registered owner and to all persons claiming a lien thereon, as disclosed by the records in the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or of a corresponding agency in any other state.

(b) Notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, shall be sent within 7 business days after the date of storage of the vehicle or vessel to the registered owner and to all persons of record claiming a lien against the vehicle or vessel. It shall state the fact of possession of the vehicle or vessel,

that a lien as provided in subsection (2) is claimed, that charges have accrued and the amount thereof, that the lien is subject to enforcement pursuant to law, and that the owner or lienholder, if any, has the right to a hearing as set forth in subsection (5) (4), and that any vehicle or vessel which remains unclaimed, or for which the charges for recovery, towing, or storage services remain unpaid, may be sold in 35 days free of all prior liens.

(c) If attempts to locate the owner or lienholder prove unsuccessful, the towing-storage operator shall, after 7 working days, excluding Saturday and Sunday, of the initial tow or storage, notify the public agency of jurisdiction in writing by certified mail or acknowledged hand delivery that the towing-storage company has been unable to locate the owner or lienholder and a physical search of the vehicle or vessel has disclosed no ownership information and a good faith effort has been made. For purposes of this paragraph, subsection (9) (8), and s. 715.05, "good faith effort" means that the following checks have been performed by the company to establish prior state of registration and for title:

1. Check of vehicle or vessel for any type of tag, tag record, temporary tag, or regular tag.

2. Check of law enforcement report for tag number or other information identifying the vehicle or vessel, if the vehicle or vessel was towed at the request of a law enforcement officer.

3. Check of trip sheet or tow ticket of tow truck operator to see if a tag was on vehicle at beginning of tow, if private tow.

4. If there is no address of the owner on the impound report, check of law enforcement report to see if an out-of-state address is indicated from driver license information.

5. Check of vehicle or vessel for inspection sticker or other stickers and decals that may indicate a state of possible registration.

6. Check of the interior of the vehicle or vessel for any papers that may be in the glove box, trunk, or other areas for a state of registration.

7. Check of vehicle for vehicle identification number.

8. Check of vessel for vessel registration number.

9. Check of vessel hull for a hull identification number which should be carved, burned, stamped, embossed, or otherwise permanently affixed to the outboard side of the transom or, if there is no transom, to the outmost seaboard side at the end of the hull that bears the rudder or other steering mechanism.

(5)(a)(4)(a) The owner of a vehicle or vessel removed pursuant to the provisions of subsection (2), or any person claiming a lien, other than the towing-storage operator, within 10 days after the time she or he has knowledge of the location of the vehicle or vessel, may file a complaint in the county court of the county in which the vehicle or vessel is stored or in which

the owner resides to determine if her or his property was wrongfully taken or withheld from her or him.

(b) Upon filing of a complaint, an owner or lienholder may have her or his vehicle or vessel released upon posting with the court a cash or surety bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the charges for towing or storage and lot rental amount to ensure the payment of such charges in the event she or he does not prevail. Upon the posting of the bond and the payment of the applicable fee set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate notifying the lienor of the posting of the bond and directing the lienor to release the vehicle or vessel. At the time of such release, after reasonable inspection, she or he shall give a receipt to the towing-storage company reciting any claims she or he has for loss or damage to the vehicle or vessel or the contents thereof.

(c) Upon determining the respective rights of the parties, the court may award damages and costs in favor of the prevailing party. In any event, the final order shall provide for immediate payment in full of recovery, towing, and storage fees by the vehicle or vessel owner or lienholder; or the agency ordering the tow; or the owner, lessee, or agent thereof of the property from which the vehicle or vessel was removed.

(6)(5) Any vehicle or vessel which is stored pursuant to subsection (2) and which remains unclaimed, or for which reasonable charges for recovery, towing, or storing remain unpaid or for which a lot rental amount is due and owing to the mobile home park owner, as evidenced by a judgment for unpaid rent, and any contents not released pursuant to subsection (10) (9), may be sold by the owner or operator of the storage space for such towing or storage charge or unpaid lot rental amount after 35 days from the time the vehicle or vessel is stored therein. The sale shall be at public auction for cash. If the date of the sale was not included in the notice required in subsection (4) (3), notice of the sale shall be given to the person in whose name the vehicle, vessel, or mobile home is registered, to the mobile home park owner, and to all persons claiming a lien on the vehicle or vessel as shown on the records of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or of the corresponding agency in any other state. Notice shall be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the owner of the vehicle or vessel and the person having the recorded lien on the vehicle or vessel at the address shown on the records of the registering agency and shall be mailed not less than 15 days before the date of the sale. After diligent search and inquiry, if the name and address of the registered owner or the owner of the recorded lien cannot be ascertained, the requirements of notice by mail may be dispensed with. In addition to the notice by mail, public notice of the time and place of sale shall be made by publishing a notice thereof one time, at least 10 days prior to the date of the sale, in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the sale is to be held. The proceeds of the sale, after payment of reasonable towing and storage charges, costs of the sale, and the unpaid lot rental amount, in that order of priority, shall be deposited with the clerk of the circuit court for the county if the owner is absent, and the clerk shall hold such proceeds subject to the claim of the person legally entitled thereto. The clerk shall be entitled to receive 5 percent of such proceeds for the care and disbursement thereof. The certificate

of title issued under this law shall be discharged of all liens unless otherwise provided by court order.

(7)(a)(6) A wrecker operator ~~No person regularly engaged in the business of recovering, towing, or storing vehicles or vessels is not~~ shall be liable for damages connected with such services, theft of such vehicles or vessels, or theft of personal property contained in such vehicles or vessels, provided that such services they have been performed with reasonable care and provided, further, that, in the case of removal of a vehicle or vessel upon the request of a person purporting, and reasonably appearing, to be the owner or lessee, or a person authorized by the owner or lessee, of the property from which such vehicle or vessel is removed, such removal has been done in compliance with s. 715.07. Further, a wrecker operator is not liable for damage connected with such services when complying with the lawful directions of a law enforcement officer to remove a vehicle stopped, standing, or parked upon a street or highway in such a position as to obstruct the normal movement of traffic or in such a condition as to create a hazard to other traffic upon the street or highway.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection, a wrecker operator is presumed to use reasonable care to prevent the theft of a vehicle or vessel or of any personal property contained in such vehicle stored in the wrecker operator's storage facility if all of the following apply:

1. The wrecker operator surrounds the storage facility with a chain-link or solid-wall type fence at least 6 feet in height;

2. The wrecker operator has illuminated the storage facility with lighting of sufficient intensity to reveal persons and vehicles at a distance of at least 150 feet during nighttime; and

3. The wrecker operator uses one or more of the following security methods to discourage theft of vehicles or vessels or of any personal property contained in such vehicles or vessels stored in the wrecker operator's storage facility:

a. A night dispatcher or watchman remains on duty at the storage facility from sunset to sunrise;

b. A security dog remains at the storage facility from sunset to sunrise;

c. Security cameras or other similar surveillance devices monitor the storage facility; or

d. A security guard service examines the storage facility at least once each hour from sunset to sunrise.

(c) Any law enforcement agency requesting that a motor vehicle be removed from an accident scene, street, or highway must conduct an inventory and prepare a written record of all personal property found in the vehicle before the vehicle is removed by a wrecker operator. A wrecker operator is not liable for the loss of personal property alleged to be contained in such a vehicle when such personal property was not identified on the inventory

record prepared by the law enforcement agency requesting the removal of the vehicle.

(8)(7) A person regularly engaged in the business of recovering, towing, or storing vehicles or vessels, except a person licensed under chapter 493 while engaged in "repossession" activities as defined in s. 493.6101, may not operate a wrecker, tow truck, or car carrier unless the name, address, and telephone number of the company performing the service is clearly printed in contrasting colors on the driver and passenger sides of its vehicle. The name must be in at least 3-inch permanently affixed letters, and the address and telephone number must be in at least 1-inch permanently affixed letters.

(9)(8) Failure to make good faith best efforts to comply with the notice requirements of this section shall preclude the imposition of any storage charges against such vehicle or vessel.

(10)(9) Persons who provide services pursuant to this section shall permit vehicle or vessel owners or their agents, which agency is evidenced by a writing acknowledged by the owner before a notary public or other person empowered by law to administer oaths, to inspect the towed vehicle or vessel and shall release to the owner or agent all personal property not affixed to the vehicle or vessel which was in the vehicle or vessel at the time the vehicle or vessel came into the custody of the person providing such services.

(11)(a)(10)(a) Any person regularly engaged in the business of recovering, towing, or storing vehicles or vessels who comes into possession of a vehicle or vessel pursuant to subsection (2) and who has complied with the provisions of subsections (3) and (6) (5), when such vehicle or vessel is to be sold for purposes of being dismantled, destroyed, or changed in such manner that it is not the motor vehicle, vessel, or mobile home described in the certificate of title, shall apply to the county tax collector for a certificate of destruction. A certificate of destruction, which authorizes the dismantling or destruction of the vehicle or vessel described therein, shall be reassignable and shall accompany the vehicle or vessel for which it is issued, when such vehicle or vessel is sold for such purposes, in lieu of a certificate of title. The application for a certificate of destruction must ~~shall~~ include an affidavit from the applicant that it has complied with all applicable requirements of this section and, if the vehicle or vessel is not registered in this state, by a statement from a law enforcement officer that the vehicle or vessel is not reported stolen, and shall be accompanied by such documentation as may be required by the department.

(b) The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles shall charge a fee of \$3 for each certificate of destruction. A service charge of \$4.25 shall be collected and retained by the tax collector who processes the application.

(c) The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles may adopt such rules as it deems necessary or proper for the administration of this subsection.

(12)(a)(11)(a) Any person who violates any provision of subsection ~~subsections~~ (1), subsection (2), subsection (4), subsection (5), subsection (6), or

subsection (7) through (6) is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(b) Any person who violates the provisions of subsections (8) (7) through (11) (10) is guilty of a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

(c) Any person who uses a false or fictitious name, gives a false or fictitious address, or makes any false statement in any application or affidavit required under the provisions of this section is guilty of a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Section 12. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 319.30, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

319.30 Definitions; dismantling, destruction, change of identity of motor vehicle or mobile home; salvage.—

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

(a) “Certificate of destruction” means the certificate issued pursuant to s. 713.78(11) ~~s. 713.78(10)~~.

Section 13. Subsection (6) of section 316.193, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

316.193 Driving under the influence; penalties.—

(6) With respect to any person convicted of a violation of subsection (1), regardless of any penalty imposed pursuant to subsection (2), subsection (3), or subsection (4):

(a) For the first conviction, the court shall place the defendant on probation for a period not to exceed 1 year and, as a condition of such probation, shall order the defendant to participate in public service or a community work project for a minimum of 50 hours; or the court may order instead, that any defendant pay an additional fine of \$10 for each hour of public service or community work otherwise required, if, after consideration of the residence or location of the defendant at the time public service or community work is required, payment of the fine is in the best interests of the state. However, the total period of probation and incarceration may not exceed 1 year. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 10 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 10 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e), paragraph (f), or paragraph (g).

(b) For the second conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 5 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the

court shall order imprisonment for not less than 10 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 30 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 30 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e), paragraph (f), or paragraph (g). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(c) For the third or subsequent conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 10 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the court shall order imprisonment for not less than 30 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 90 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 90 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e), paragraph (f), or paragraph (g). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(d) The court must at the time of sentencing the defendant issue an order for the impoundment or immobilization of a vehicle. Within 7 business days after the date that the court issues the order of impoundment or immobilization, and once again 30 business days before the actual impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle, the clerk of the court must send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner of each vehicle, if the registered owner is a person other than the defendant, and to each person of record claiming a lien against the vehicle.

(e) A person who owns but was not operating the vehicle when the offense occurred may submit to the court a police report indicating that the vehicle was stolen at the time of the offense or documentation of having purchased the vehicle after the offense was committed from an entity other than the defendant or the defendant's agent. If the court finds that the vehicle was stolen or that the sale was not made to circumvent the order and allow the defendant continued access to the vehicle, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vehicle will incur no costs. If the court denies the request to dismiss the order of impoundment or immobilization, the petitioner may request an evidentiary hearing.

(f) A person who owns but was not operating the vehicle when the offense occurred, and whose vehicle was stolen or who purchased the vehicle after the offense was committed directly from the defendant or the defendant's agent, may request an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the impoundment or immobilization should occur. If the court finds that either the vehicle was stolen or the purchase was made without knowledge of the offense, that the purchaser had no relationship to the defendant other than through the transaction, and that such purchase would not circumvent the

order and allow the defendant continued access to the vehicle, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vehicle will incur no costs.

(g) The court shall also dismiss the order of impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle if the court finds that the family of the owner of the vehicle has no other private means of transportation.

~~(d) In addition to the penalty imposed under paragraph (a), paragraph (b), or paragraph (c), the court shall also order the impoundment or immobilization of the vehicle that was driven by, or in the actual physical control of, the offender, unless the court finds that the family of the owner of the vehicle has no other public or private means of transportation. The period of impoundment or immobilization is 10 days, or, for the second conviction within 3 years, 30 days, or, for the third conviction within 5 years, 90 days and may not be concurrent with probation or imprisonment. If the vehicle is leased or rented, the period of impoundment or immobilization may not extend beyond the expiration of the lease or rental agreement. Within 7 business days after the date that the court issues the order of impoundment or immobilization, the clerk of the court shall send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner of the vehicle if the registered owner is a person other than the offender and to each person of record claiming a lien against the vehicle.~~

(h) All costs and fees for the impoundment or immobilization, including the cost of notification, must be paid by the owner of the vehicle or, if the vehicle is leased or rented, by the person leasing or renting the vehicle, unless the impoundment or immobilization order is dismissed. All provisions of s. 713.78 shall apply.

(i) The person who owns a vehicle that is impounded or immobilized under this paragraph, or a person who has a lien of record against such a vehicle and who has not requested a review of the impoundment pursuant to paragraph (e), paragraph (f), or paragraph (g), may, within 10 days after the date that person has knowledge of the location of the vehicle, file a complaint in the county in which the owner resides to determine whether the vehicle was wrongfully taken or withheld from the owner or lienholder. Upon the filing of a complaint, the owner or lienholder may have the vehicle released by posting with the court a bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the costs and fees for impoundment or immobilization, including towing or storage, to ensure the payment of such costs and fees if the owner or lienholder does not prevail. When the bond is posted and the fee is paid as set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate releasing the vehicle. At the time of release, after reasonable inspection, the owner or lienholder must give a receipt to the towing or storage company indicating any loss or damage to the vehicle or to the contents of the vehicle.

(j)(e) A defendant, in the court's discretion, may be required to serve all or any portion of a term of imprisonment to which the defendant has been sentenced pursuant to this section in a residential alcoholism treatment program or a residential drug abuse treatment program. Any time spent in such a program must be credited by the court toward the term of imprisonment.

For the purposes of this section, any conviction for a violation of s. 327.35; a previous conviction for the violation of former s. 316.1931, former s. 860.01, or former s. 316.028; or a previous conviction outside this state for driving under the influence, driving while intoxicated, driving with an unlawful blood-alcohol level, driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level, or any other similar alcohol-related or drug-related traffic offense, is also considered a previous conviction for violation of this section. However, in satisfaction of the fine imposed pursuant to this section, the court may, upon a finding that the defendant is financially unable to pay either all or part of the fine, order that the defendant participate for a specified additional period of time in public service or a community work project in lieu of payment of that portion of the fine which the court determines the defendant is unable to pay. In determining such additional sentence, the court shall consider the amount of the unpaid portion of the fine and the reasonable value of the services to be ordered; however, the court may not compute the reasonable value of services at a rate less than the federal minimum wage at the time of sentencing.

Section 14. Subsection (6) of section 327.35, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

327.35 Boating under the influence; penalties.—

(6) With respect to any person convicted of a violation of subsection (1), regardless of any other penalty imposed:

(a) For the first conviction, the court shall place the defendant on probation for a period not to exceed 1 year and, as a condition of such probation, shall order the defendant to participate in public service or a community work project for a minimum of 50 hours. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 10 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 10 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). The total period of probation and incarceration may not exceed 1 year.

(b) For the second conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 5 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the court shall order imprisonment for not less than 10 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 30 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 30 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(c) For the third or subsequent conviction for an offense that occurs within a period of 10 years after the date of a prior conviction for violation of this section, the court shall order imprisonment for not less than 30 days. The court must also, as a condition of probation, order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by or in the actual control of the defendant or any one vehicle registered in the defendant's name at the time of impoundment or immobilization, for a period of 90 days or for the unexpired term of any lease or rental agreement that expires within 90 days. The impoundment or immobilization must not occur concurrently with the incarceration of the defendant. The impoundment or immobilization order may be dismissed in accordance with paragraph (e) or paragraph (f). At least 48 hours of confinement must be consecutive.

(d) The court must at the time of sentencing the defendant issue an order for the impoundment or immobilization of a vessel. Within 7 business days after the date that the court issues the order of impoundment, and once again 30 business days before the actual impoundment or immobilization of the vessel, the clerk of the court must send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner of each vessel, if the registered owner is a person other than the defendant, and to each person of record claiming a lien against the vessel.

(e) A person who owns but was not operating the vessel when the offense occurred may submit to the court a police report indicating that the vessel was stolen at the time of the offense or documentation of having purchased the vessel after the offense was committed from an entity other than the defendant or the defendant's agent. If the court finds that the vessel was stolen or that the sale was not made to circumvent the order and allow the defendant continued access to the vessel, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vessel will incur no costs. If the court denies the request to dismiss the order of impoundment or immobilization, the petitioner may request an evidentiary hearing.

(f) A person who owns but was not operating the vessel when the offense occurred, and whose vessel was stolen or who purchased the vessel after the offense was committed directly from the defendant or the defendant's agent, may request an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the impoundment or immobilization should occur. If the court finds that either the vessel was stolen or the purchase was made without knowledge of the offense, that the purchaser had no relationship to the defendant other than through the transaction, and that such purchase would not circumvent the order and allow the defendant continued access to the vessel, the order must be dismissed and the owner of the vessel will incur no costs.

~~(d) In addition to any other penalty imposed, the court shall also order the impoundment or immobilization of the vessel that was operated by, or in the actual physical control of, the offender. The period of impoundment or immobilization is 10 days, or, for the second conviction within 3 years, 30 days, or, for the third conviction within 5 years, 90 days and may not be concurrent with probation or imprisonment. If the vessel is leased or rented, the period of impoundment or immobilization may not extend beyond the expiration of the lease or rental agreement. Within 7 business days after the~~

~~date that the court issues the order of impoundment or immobilization, the clerk of the court shall send notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the registered owner of the vessel if the registered owner is a person other than the offender and to each person of record claiming a lien against the vessel.~~

(g) All costs and fees for the impoundment or immobilization, including the cost of notification, must be paid by the owner of the vessel or, if the vessel is leased or rented, by the person leasing or renting the vessel, unless the impoundment or immobilization order is dismissed.

(h) The person who owns a vessel that is impounded or immobilized under this paragraph, or a person who has a lien of record against such a vessel and who has not requested a review of the impoundment pursuant to paragraph (e) or paragraph (f), may, within 10 days after the date that person has knowledge of the location of the vessel, file a complaint in the county in which the owner resides to determine whether the vessel was wrongfully taken or withheld from the owner or lienholder. Upon the filing of a complaint, the owner or lienholder may have the vessel released by posting with the court a bond or other adequate security equal to the amount of the costs and fees for impoundment or immobilization, including towing or storage, to ensure the payment of the costs and fees if the owner or lienholder does not prevail. When the bond is posted and the fee is paid as set forth in s. 28.24, the clerk of the court shall issue a certificate releasing the vessel. At the time of release, after reasonable inspection, the owner or lienholder must give a receipt to the towing or storage company indicating any loss or damage to the vessel or to the contents of the vessel.

(i)(e) A defendant, in the court's discretion, may be required to serve all or any portion of a term of imprisonment to which the defendant has been sentenced pursuant to this section in a residential alcoholism treatment program or a residential drug abuse treatment program. Any time spent in such a program must be credited by the court toward the term of imprisonment.

For the purposes of this section, any conviction for a violation of s. 316.193, a previous conviction for the violation of former s. 316.1931, former s. 860.01, or former s. 316.028, or a previous conviction outside this state for driving under the influence, driving while intoxicated, driving with an unlawful blood-alcohol level, driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level, or any other similar alcohol-related or drug-related traffic offense, is also considered a previous conviction for violation of this section.

Section 15. This act shall take effect October 1 of the year in which enacted.

Became a law without the Governor's approval May 30, 1998.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 29, 1998.