

House Bill No. 561

An act relating to protective injunctions; providing a popular name; amending s. 784.046, F.S.; defining the term “sexual violence”; providing for a cause of action for an injunction for protection in cases of sexual violence; providing for a petition to be filed on the victim’s own behalf or on behalf of a minor child under certain circumstances; requiring that the sexual violence be reported to a law enforcement agency and that the person filing the petition cooperate in any investigation; providing for a petition to be filed against a respondent who was sentenced to imprisonment for the sexual violence and who has been or will be released; prohibiting the assessment of filing fees for a petition for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence; providing for the Office of the State Courts Administrator to reimburse the clerks of the court for filing fees, subject to legislative appropriation; providing requirements for a petition for protection against sexual violence; specifying the period of effect for an ex parte temporary injunction against a respondent released from incarceration; providing requirements for serving an injunction; redesignating the Domestic, Dating, and Repeat Violence Injunction Statewide Verification System as the Domestic, Dating, Sexual, and Repeat Violence Injunction Statewide Verification System; requiring notice to the sheriff and law enforcement agencies; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Popular name.—This act shall be known as “The Victim’s Freedom Act.”

Section 2. Section 784.046, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

784.046 Action by victim of repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence for protective injunction; powers and duties of court and clerk of court; filing and form of petition; notice and hearing; temporary injunction; issuance; statewide verification system; enforcement.—

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

(a) “Violence” means any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, or false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death, by a person against any other person.

(b) “Repeat violence” means two incidents of violence or stalking committed by the respondent, one of which must have been within 6 months of the filing of the petition, which are directed against the petitioner or the petitioner’s immediate family member.

(c) “Sexual violence” means any one incident of:

1. Sexual battery, as defined in chapter 794;
2. A lewd or lascivious act, as defined in chapter 800, committed upon or in the presence of a person younger than 16 years of age;
3. Luring or enticing a child, as described in chapter 787;
4. Sexual performance by a child, as described in chapter 827; or
5. Any other forcible felony wherein a sexual act is committed or attempted,

regardless of whether criminal charges based on the incident were filed, reduced, or dismissed by the state attorney.

(d)(e) “Dating violence” means violence between individuals who have or have had a continuing and significant relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on the consideration of the following factors:

1. A dating relationship must have existed within the past 6 months;
2. The nature of the relationship must have been characterized by the expectation of affection or sexual involvement between the parties; and
3. The frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship must have included that the persons have been involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship.

The term does not include violence in a casual acquaintanceship or violence between individuals who only have engaged in ordinary fraternization in a business or social context.

(2) There is created a cause of action for an injunction for protection in cases of repeat violence, ~~and there is created a separate cause of action for an injunction for protection in cases of dating violence,~~ and there is created a separate cause of action for an injunction for protection in cases of sexual violence.

(a) Any person who is the victim of repeat violence or the parent or legal guardian of any minor child who is living at home and who seeks an injunction for protection against repeat violence on behalf of the minor child has standing in the circuit court to file a sworn petition for an injunction for protection against repeat violence.

(b) Any person who is the victim of dating violence and has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of another act of dating violence, or any person who has reasonable cause to believe he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of an act of dating violence, or the parent or legal guardian of any minor child who is living at home and who seeks an injunction for protection against dating violence on behalf of that minor child, has standing in the circuit court to file a sworn petition for an injunction for protection against dating violence.

(c) A person who is the victim of sexual violence or the parent or legal guardian of a minor child who is living at home who is the victim of sexual violence has standing in the circuit court to file a sworn petition for an injunction for protection against sexual violence on his or her own behalf or on behalf of the minor child if:

1. The person has reported the sexual violence to a law enforcement agency and is cooperating in any criminal proceeding against the respondent, regardless of whether criminal charges based on the sexual violence have been filed, reduced, or dismissed by the state attorney; or

2. The respondent who committed the sexual violence against the victim or minor child was sentenced to a term of imprisonment in state prison for the sexual violence and the respondent's term of imprisonment has expired or is due to expire within 90 days following the date the petition is filed.

~~(d)~~(e) ~~A~~ This cause of action for an injunction may be sought whether or not any other petition, complaint, or cause of action is currently available or pending between the parties.

~~(e)~~(d) ~~A~~ This cause of action for an injunction does shall not require that the petitioner be represented by an attorney.

(3)(a) The clerk of the court shall provide a copy of this section, simplified forms, and clerical assistance for the preparation and filing of such a petition by any person who is not represented by counsel.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, the clerk of the court may not assess a fee for filing a petition for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence. However, subject to legislative appropriation, the clerk of the court may, each quarter, submit to the Office of the State Courts Administrator a certified request for reimbursement for petitions for protection issued by the court under this section at the rate of \$40 per petition. The request for reimbursement shall be submitted in the form and manner prescribed by the Office of the State Courts Administrator. From this reimbursement, the clerk shall pay the law enforcement agency serving the injunction the fee requested by the law enforcement agency; however, this fee may not exceed \$20. In the event the person desiring to file for an injunction pursuant to this section does not have sufficient funds with which to pay filing fees to the clerk of the court or service fees to the sheriff or law enforcement agency and signs an affidavit so stating, the fees shall be waived by the clerk of the court or the sheriff or law enforcement agency to the extent necessary to process the petition and serve the injunction, subject to a subsequent order of the court relative to the payment of such fees.

(c) No bond shall be required by the court for the entry of an injunction.

(d) The clerk of the court shall provide the petitioner with a certified copy of any injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence entered by the court.

(4)(a) The sworn petition shall allege the incidents of repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence and shall include the specific facts and

circumstances ~~that~~ which form the basis upon which relief is sought. With respect to a minor child who is living at home, the parent or legal guardian of the minor child must have been an eyewitness to, or have direct physical evidence or affidavits from eyewitnesses of, the specific facts and circumstances which form the basis upon which relief is sought.

(b) The sworn petition ~~must~~ shall be in substantially the following form:

PETITION FOR INJUNCTION FOR PROTECTION
AGAINST REPEAT VIOLENCE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE,
OR DATING VIOLENCE

Before me, the undersigned authority, personally appeared Petitioner ...(Name)..., who has been sworn and says that the following statements are true:

1. Petitioner resides at ...(address)...

2. Respondent resides at ...(address)...

3.a. Petitioner has suffered repeat violence as demonstrated by the fact that the respondent has:

...(enumerate incidents of violence)...

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b. Petitioner has suffered sexual violence as demonstrated by the fact that the respondent has: (enumerate incident of violence and attach incident report by law enforcement agency or notice of inmate release.)

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c.b. Petitioner is a victim of dating violence and has reasonable cause to believe that he or she is in imminent danger of becoming the victim of another act of dating violence or has reasonable cause to believe that he or she is in imminent danger of becoming a victim of dating violence, as demonstrated by the fact that the respondent has: ...(list the specific incident or incidents of violence and describe the length of time of the relationship, whether it has been in existence during the last 6 months, the nature of the relationship of a romantic or intimate nature, the frequency and type of interaction, and any other facts that characterize the relationship)...

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4. Petitioner genuinely fears repeat violence by the respondent.

5. Petitioner seeks: an immediate injunction against the respondent, enjoining him or her from committing any further acts of violence; an injunction enjoining the respondent from committing any further acts of violence; and an injunction providing any terms the court deems necessary for the

protection of the petitioner and the petitioner's immediate family, including any injunctions or directives to law enforcement agencies.

(5) Upon the filing of the petition, the court shall set a hearing to be held at the earliest possible time. The respondent shall be personally served with a copy of the petition, notice of hearing, and temporary injunction, if any, prior to the hearing.

(6)(a) When it appears to the court that an immediate and present danger of violence exists, the court may grant a temporary injunction which may be granted in an ex parte hearing, pending a full hearing, and may grant such relief as the court deems proper, including an injunction enjoining the respondent from committing any acts of violence.

(b) In a hearing ex parte for the purpose of obtaining such temporary injunction, no evidence other than the verified pleading or affidavit shall be used as evidence, unless the respondent appears at the hearing or has received reasonable notice of the hearing.

(c) Any such ex parte temporary injunction shall be effective for a fixed period not to exceed 15 days. However, an ex parte temporary injunction granted under subparagraph (2)(c)2. is effective for 15 days following the date the respondent is released from incarceration. A full hearing, as provided by this section, shall be set for a date no later than the date when the temporary injunction ceases to be effective. The court may grant a continuance of the ex parte injunction and the full hearing before or during a hearing, for good cause shown by any party.

(7) Upon notice and hearing, the court may grant such relief as the court deems proper, including an injunction:

(a) Enjoining the respondent from committing any acts of violence.

(b) Ordering such other relief as the court deems necessary for the protection of the petitioner, including injunctions or directives to law enforcement agencies, as provided in this section.

(c) The terms of the injunction shall remain in full force and effect until modified or dissolved. Either party may move at any time to modify or dissolve the injunction. Such relief may be granted in addition to other civil or criminal remedies.

(d) A temporary or final judgment on injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence entered pursuant to this section shall, on its face, indicate that:

1. The injunction is valid and enforceable in all counties of the State of Florida.

2. Law enforcement officers may use their arrest powers pursuant to s. 901.15(6) to enforce the terms of the injunction.

3. The court had jurisdiction over the parties and matter under the laws of Florida and that reasonable notice and opportunity to be heard was given

to the person against whom the order is sought sufficient to protect that person's right to due process.

4. The date that the respondent was served with the temporary or final order, if obtainable.

(8)(a)1. The clerk of the court shall furnish a copy of the petition, notice of hearing, and temporary injunction, if any, to the sheriff or a law enforcement agency of the county where the respondent resides or can be found, who shall serve it upon the respondent as soon thereafter as possible on any day of the week and at any time of the day or night. The clerk of the court shall be responsible for furnishing to the sheriff such information on the respondent's physical description and location as is required by the department to comply with the verification procedures set forth in this section. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the chief judge of each circuit, in consultation with the appropriate sheriff, may authorize a law enforcement agency within the chief judge's jurisdiction to effect this type of service and to receive a portion of the service fee. No person shall be authorized or permitted to serve or execute an injunction issued under this section unless the person is a law enforcement officer as defined in chapter 943.

2. If the respondent is in the custody of the Department of Corrections and the petition for an injunction has been filed as provided in subparagraph (2)(c)2., the clerk of the court shall furnish a copy of the petition, notice of hearing, and temporary injunction, if any, to the Department of Corrections and copies shall be served upon the respondent as soon thereafter as possible on any day of the week and at any time of the day or night. The petition, notice of hearing, or temporary injunction may be served in a state prison by a correctional officer as defined in chapter 943. If the respondent in custody is not served before his or her release, a copy of the petition, notice of hearing, and temporary injunction, if any, shall be forwarded to the sheriff of the county specified in the respondent's release plan for service as provided in subparagraph 1.

3.2. When an injunction is issued, if the petitioner requests the assistance of a law enforcement agency, the court may order that an officer from the appropriate law enforcement agency accompany the petitioner and assist in the execution or service of the injunction. A law enforcement officer shall accept a copy of an injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence, certified by the clerk of the court, from the petitioner and immediately serve it upon a respondent who has been located but not yet served.

(b) There shall be created a Domestic, Dating, Sexual, and Repeat Violence Injunction Statewide Verification System within the Department of Law Enforcement. The department shall establish, implement, and maintain a statewide communication system capable of electronically transmitting information to and between criminal justice agencies relating to domestic violence injunctions, dating violence injunctions, sexual violence injunctions, and repeat violence injunctions issued by the courts throughout the state. Such information must include, but is not limited to, information as to the existence and status of any injunction for verification purposes.

(c)1. Within 24 hours after the court issues an injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence or changes or vacates an injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence, the clerk of the court must forward a copy of the injunction to the sheriff with jurisdiction over the residence of the petitioner.

2. Within 24 hours after service of process of an injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence upon a respondent, the law enforcement officer must forward the written proof of service of process to the sheriff with jurisdiction over the residence of the petitioner.

3. Within 24 hours after the sheriff receives a certified copy of the injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence, the sheriff must make information relating to the injunction available to other law enforcement agencies by electronically transmitting such information to the department.

4. Within 24 hours after the sheriff or other law enforcement officer has made service upon the respondent and the sheriff has been so notified, the sheriff must make information relating to the service available to other law enforcement agencies by electronically transmitting such information to the department.

5. Within 24 hours after an injunction for protection against repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence is lifted, terminated, or otherwise rendered no longer effective by ruling of the court, the clerk of the court must notify the sheriff or local law enforcement agency receiving original notification of the injunction as provided in subparagraph 2. That agency shall, within 24 hours after receiving such notification from the clerk of the court, notify the department of such action of the court.

(9)(a) The court shall enforce, through a civil or criminal contempt proceeding, a violation of an injunction for protection. The court may enforce the respondent's compliance with the injunction by imposing a monetary assessment. The clerk of the court shall collect and receive such assessments. On a monthly basis, the clerk shall transfer the moneys collected pursuant to this paragraph to the State Treasury for deposit in the Crimes Compensation Trust Fund established in s. 960.21.

(b) If the respondent is arrested by a law enforcement officer under s. 901.15(10) for committing an act of repeat violence, sexual violence, or dating violence in violation of ~~an a-repeat-or-dating-violence~~ injunction for protection, the respondent shall be held in custody until brought before the court as expeditiously as possible for the purpose of enforcing the injunction and for admittance to bail in accordance with chapter 903 and the applicable rules of criminal procedure, pending a hearing.

(10) The petitioner or the respondent may move the court to modify or dissolve an injunction at any time.

(11) A law enforcement officer acting in good faith under this section and the officer's employing agency shall be immune from all liability, civil or

criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed by reason of the officer's or agency's actions in carrying out the provisions of this section.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.

Approved by the Governor June 6, 2003.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 6, 2003.