

Part 7

Rules of Construction for Governing Instruments

75-2-701 Scope.

In the absence of a finding of a contrary intention, the rules of construction in this part control the construction of a governing instrument. The rules of construction in this part apply to a governing instrument of any type, except as the application of a particular section is limited by its terms to a specific type or types of provision or governing instrument.

Repealed and Re-enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-702 Requirement of survival by 120 hours -- Under probate code or governing instrument -- Co-owners -- Exceptions -- Protection of payors, third parties, and bona fide purchasers -- Personal liability of recipient.

- (1) Except as provided in Subsection (4), an individual who is not established by clear and convincing evidence to have survived an event, including the death of another individual, by 120 hours is considered to have predeceased the event.
- (2) Except as provided in Subsection (4), for purposes of a provision of a governing instrument that relates to an individual surviving an event, including the death of another individual, an individual who is not established by clear and convincing evidence to have survived the event by 120 hours is considered to have predeceased the event.
- (3) Except as provided in Subsection (4), if:
 - (a) it is not established by clear and convincing evidence that one of two co-owners with right of survivorship survived the other co-owner by 120 hours, 1/2 of the property passes as if one had survived by 120 hours and 1/2 as if the other had survived by 120 hours; and
 - (b) there are more than two co-owners and it is not established by clear and convincing evidence that at least one of them survived the others by 120 hours, the property passes in the proportion that one bears to the whole number of co-owners. For the purposes of this subsection, "co-owners with right of survivorship" includes joint tenants, tenants by the entireties, and other co-owners of property or accounts held under circumstances that entitles one or more to the whole of the property or account on the death of the other or others.
- (4) Survival by 120 hours is not required if:
 - (a) the governing instrument contains language dealing explicitly with simultaneous deaths or deaths in a common disaster and that language is operable under the facts of the case;
 - (b) the governing instrument expressly indicates that an individual is not required to survive an event, including the death of another individual, by any specified period or expressly requires the individual to survive the event by a specified period; but survival of the event or the specified period shall be established by clear and convincing evidence;
 - (c) the imposition of a 120-hour requirement of survival would cause a nonvested property interest or a power of appointment to fail to qualify for validity under Section 75-2-1203 or to become invalid under Section 75-2-1203; but survival shall be established by clear and convincing evidence; or
 - (d) the application of a 120-hour requirement of survival to multiple governing instruments would result in an unintended failure or duplication of a disposition; but survival shall be established by clear and convincing evidence.
- (5)

- (a) A payor or other third party is not liable for having made a payment or transferred an item of property or any other benefit to a beneficiary designated in a governing instrument who, under this section, is not entitled to the payment or item of property, or for having taken any other action in good faith reliance on the beneficiary's apparent entitlement under the terms of the governing instrument, before the payor or other third party received written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this section. A payor or other third party is liable for a payment made or other action taken after the payor or other third party received written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this section.
 - (b) Written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under Subsection (5)(a) shall be mailed to the payor's or other third party's main office or home by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or served upon the payor or other third party in the same manner as a summons in a civil action. Upon receipt of written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this section, a payor or other third party may pay any amount owed or transfer or deposit any item of property held by it to or with the court having jurisdiction of the probate proceedings relating to the decedent's estate, or if no proceedings have been commenced, to or with the court having jurisdiction of probate proceedings relating to the decedent's estates located in the county of the decedent's residence. The court shall hold the funds or item of property and, upon its determination under this section, shall order disbursement in accordance with the determination. Payments, transfers, or deposits made to or with the court discharge the payor or other third party from all claims for the value of amounts paid to or items of property transferred to or deposited with the court.
- (6)
- (a) A person who purchases property for value and without notice, or who receives a payment or other item of property in partial or full satisfaction of a legally enforceable obligation, is neither obligated under this section to return the payment, item of property, or benefit nor is liable under this section for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit. But a person who, not for value, receives a payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which the person is not entitled under this section is obligated to return the payment, item of property, or benefit, or is personally liable for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit, to the person who is entitled to it under this section.
 - (b) If this section or any part of this section is preempted by federal law with respect to a payment, an item of property, or any other benefit covered by this section, a person who, not for value, receives the payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which the person is not entitled under this section is obligated to return the payment, item of property, or benefit, or is personally liable for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit, to the person who would have been entitled to it were this section or part of this section not preempted.

Amended by Chapter 301, 2003 General Session

75-2-703 Choice of law as to meaning and effect of governing instrument.

The meaning and legal effect of a governing instrument is determined by the local law of the state selected in the governing instrument, unless the application of that law is contrary to the provisions relating to the elective share described in Part 2, Elective Share of Surviving Spouse, the provisions relating to exempt property and allowances described in Part 4, Exempt Property and Allowances, or any other public policy of this state otherwise applicable to the disposition.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-705 Class gifts construed to accord with intestate succession.

- (1) Adopted individuals and individuals born out of wedlock, and their respective descendants if appropriate to the class, are included in class gifts and other terms of relationship in accordance with the rules for intestate succession. Terms of relationship that do not differentiate relationships by blood from those by affinity, such as "uncles," "aunts," "nieces," or "nephews," are construed to exclude relatives by affinity. Terms of relationship that do not differentiate relationships by the half blood from those by the whole blood, such as "brothers," "sisters," "nieces," or "nephews," are construed to include both types of relationships.
- (2) In addition to the requirements of Subsection (1), in construing a dispositive provision of a transferor who is not the natural parent, an individual born to the natural parent is not considered the child of that parent unless the individual lived while a minor as a regular member of the household of that natural parent or of that parent's parent, brother, sister, spouse, or surviving spouse.
- (3) In addition to the requirements of Subsection (1), in construing a dispositive provision of a transferor who is not the adopting parent, an adopted individual is not considered the child of the adopting parent unless the adopted individual lived while a minor, either before or after the adoption, as a regular member of the household of the adopting parent.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-706 Definitions -- Life insurance -- Retirement plan -- Account with POD designation -- Transfer-on-death registration -- Deceased beneficiary -- Substitute gift -- Protection of payors and bona fide purchasers -- Personal liability of recipient.

- (1) As used in this section:
 - (a) "Alternative beneficiary designation" means a beneficiary designation that is expressly created by the governing instrument and, under the terms of the governing instrument, can take effect instead of another beneficiary designation on the happening of one or more events, including survival of the decedent or failure to survive the decedent, whether an event is expressed in condition-precedent, condition-subsequent, or any other form.
 - (b) "Beneficiary" means the beneficiary of a beneficiary designation under which the beneficiary shall survive the decedent and includes:
 - (i) a class member if the beneficiary designation is in the form of a class gift; and
 - (ii) an individual or class member who was deceased at the time the beneficiary designation was executed as well as an individual or class member who was then living but who failed to survive the decedent, but excludes a joint tenant of a joint tenancy with the right of survivorship and a party to a joint and survivorship account.
 - (c) "Beneficiary designation" includes an alternative beneficiary designation and a beneficiary designation in the form of a class gift.
 - (d) "Class member" includes an individual who fails to survive the decedent but who would have taken under a beneficiary designation in the form of a class gift had he survived the decedent.
 - (e) "Stepchild" means a child of the decedent's surviving, deceased, or former spouse, and not of the decedent.
 - (f) "Surviving beneficiary" or "surviving descendant" means a beneficiary or a descendant who neither predeceased the decedent nor is considered to have predeceased the decedent under Section 75-2-702.

- (2) If a beneficiary fails to survive the decedent and is a grandparent, a descendant of a grandparent, or a stepchild of the decedent, the following apply:
- (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(d), if the beneficiary designation is not in the form of a class gift and the deceased beneficiary leaves surviving descendants, a substitute gift is created in the beneficiary's surviving descendants. They take per capita at each generation the property to which the beneficiary would have been entitled had the beneficiary survived the decedent.
 - (b) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(d), if the beneficiary designation is in the form of a class gift, other than a beneficiary designation to "issue," "descendants," "heirs of the body," "heirs," "next-of-kin," "relatives," or "family," or a class described by language of similar import, a substitute gift is created in the surviving descendants of any deceased beneficiary. The property to which the beneficiaries would have been entitled had all of them survived the decedent passes to the surviving beneficiaries and the surviving descendants of the deceased beneficiaries. Each surviving beneficiary takes the share to which he would have been entitled had the deceased beneficiaries survived the decedent. Each deceased beneficiary's surviving descendants who are substituted for the deceased beneficiary take per capita at each generation the share to which the deceased beneficiary would have been entitled had the deceased beneficiary survived the decedent. For the purposes of this paragraph, "deceased beneficiary" means a class member who failed to survive the decedent and left one or more surviving descendants.
 - (c) For the purposes of Section 75-2-701, words of survivorship, such as in a beneficiary designation to an individual "if he survives me," or in a beneficiary designation to "my surviving children," are, in the absence of clear and convincing evidence, a sufficient indication of an intent contrary to the application of this section.
 - (d) If a governing instrument creates an alternative beneficiary designation with respect to a beneficiary designation for which a substitute gift is created by Subsection (2)(a) or (b), the substitute gift is superseded by the alternative beneficiary designation only if an expressly designated beneficiary of the alternative beneficiary designation is entitled to take.
- (3)
- (a) A payor is protected from liability in making payments under the terms of the beneficiary designation until the payor has received written notice of a claim to a substitute gift under this section. Payment made before the receipt of written notice of a claim to a substitute gift under this section discharges the payor, but not the recipient, from all claims for the amounts paid. A payor is liable for a payment made after the payor has received written notice of the claim. A recipient is liable for a payment received, whether or not written notice of the claim is given.
 - (b) The written notice of the claim shall be mailed to the payor's main office or home by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or served upon the payor in the same manner as a summons in a civil action. Upon receipt of written notice of the claim, a payor may pay any amount owed by it to the court having jurisdiction of the probate proceedings relating to the decedent's estate or, if no proceedings have been commenced, to the court having jurisdiction of probate proceedings relating to the decedent's estates located in the county of the decedent's residence. The court shall hold the funds and, upon its determination under this section, shall order disbursement in accordance with the determination. Payment made to the court discharges the payor from all claims for the amounts paid.
- (4)

- (a) A person who purchases property for value and without notice, or who receives a payment or other item of property in partial or full satisfaction of a legally enforceable obligation, is neither obligated under this section to return the payment, item of property, or benefit nor is liable under this section for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit. But a person who, not for value, receives a payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which the person is not entitled under this section is obligated to return the payment, item of property, or benefit, or is personally liable for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit, to the person who is entitled to it under this section.
- (b) If this section or any part of this section is preempted by federal law with respect to a payment, an item of property, or any other benefit covered by this section, a person who, not for value, receives the payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which the person is not entitled under this section is obligated to return the payment, item of property, or benefit, or is personally liable for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit, to the person who would have been entitled to it were this section or part of this section not preempted.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-707 Definitions -- Survivorship with respect to future interests under terms of trust -- Substitute takers.

(1) As used in this section:

- (a) "Alternative future interest" means an expressly created future interest that can take effect in possession or enjoyment instead of another future interest on the happening of one or more events, including survival of an event or failure to survive an event, whether an event is expressed in condition-precedent, condition-subsequent, or any other form. A residuary clause in a will does not create an alternative future interest with respect to a future interest created in a nonresiduary devise in the will, whether or not the will specifically provides that lapsed or failed devises are to pass under the residuary clause.
- (b) "Beneficiary" means the beneficiary of a future interest and includes a class member if the future interest is in the form of a class gift.
- (c) "Class member" includes an individual who fails to survive the distribution date but who would have taken under a future interest in the form of a class gift had he survived the distribution date.
- (d) "Distribution date" with respect to a future interest, means the time when the future interest is to take effect in possession or enjoyment. The distribution date need not occur at the beginning or end of a calendar day, but can occur at a time during the course of a day.
- (e) "Future interest" includes an alternative future interest and a future interest in the form of a class gift.
- (f) "Future interest under the terms of a trust" means a future interest that was created by a transfer creating a trust or to an existing trust or by an exercise of a power of appointment to an existing trust, directing the continuance of an existing trust, designating a beneficiary of an existing trust, or creating a trust.
- (g) "Surviving beneficiary" or "surviving descendant" means a beneficiary or a descendant who neither predeceased the distribution date nor is considered to have predeceased the distribution date under Section 75-2-702.

- (2) A future interest under the terms of a trust is contingent on the beneficiary's surviving the distribution date. If a beneficiary of a future interest under the terms of a trust fails to survive the distribution date, the following apply:
- (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(d), if the future interest is not in the form of a class gift and the deceased beneficiary leaves surviving descendants, a substitute gift is created in the beneficiary's surviving descendants. They take per capita at each generation the property to which the beneficiary would have been entitled had the beneficiary survived the distribution date.
 - (b) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(d), if the future interest is in the form of a class gift, other than a future interest to "issue," "descendants," "heirs of the body," "heirs," "next-of-kin," "relatives," or "family," or a class described by language of similar import, a substitute gift is created in the surviving descendants of any deceased beneficiary. The property to which the beneficiaries would have been entitled had all of them survived the distribution date passes to the surviving beneficiaries and the surviving descendants of the deceased beneficiaries. Each surviving beneficiary takes the share to which he would have been entitled had the deceased beneficiary survived the distribution date. Each deceased beneficiary's surviving descendants who are substituted for the deceased beneficiary take per capita at each generation the share to which the deceased beneficiary would have been entitled had the deceased beneficiary survived the distribution date. For the purposes of this subsection, "deceased beneficiary" means a class member who failed to survive the distribution date and left one or more surviving descendants.
 - (c) For the purposes of Section 75-2-701, words of survivorship attached to a future interest are, in the absence of clear and convincing evidence, a sufficient indication of an intent contrary to the application of this section. Words of survivorship include words of survivorship that relate to the distribution date or to an earlier or an unspecified time, whether those words of survivorship are expressed in condition-precedent, condition-subsequent, or any other form.
 - (d) If a governing instrument creates an alternative future interest with respect to a future interest for which a substitute gift is created by Subsection (2)(a) or (b), the substitute gift is superseded by the alternative future interest only if an expressly designated beneficiary of the alternative future interest is entitled to take in possession or enjoyment.
- (3) If, after the application of this section, there is no surviving taker, the property passes in the following order:
- (a) if the trust was created in a nonresiduary devise in the transferor's will or in a codicil to the transferor's will, the property passes under the residuary clause in the transferor's will; for purposes of this section, the residuary clause is treated as creating a future interest under the terms of a trust; and
 - (b) if no taker is produced by the application of Subsection (3)(a), the property passes to the transferor's heirs under Section 75-2-711.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-708 Class gifts to "descendants," "issue," or "heirs of the body" -- Form of distribution if none specified.

If a class gift in favor of "descendants," "issue," or "heirs of the body" does not specify the manner in which the property is to be distributed among the class members, the property is distributed among the class members who are living when the interest is to take effect in possession or enjoyment, in such shares as they would receive, under the applicable law of

intestate succession, if the designated ancestor had then died intestate owning the subject matter of the class gift.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-709 Definitions -- Representation -- Per capita at each generation -- Per stirpes.

(1) As used in this section:

- (a) "Deceased child" or "deceased descendant" means a child or a descendant who either predeceased the distribution date or is considered to have predeceased the distribution date under Section 75-2-702.
- (b) "Distribution date," with respect to an interest, means the time when the interest is to take effect in possession or enjoyment. The distribution date need not occur at the beginning or end of a calendar day, but can occur at a time during the course of a day.
- (c) "Surviving ancestor," "surviving child," or "surviving descendant" means an ancestor, a child, or a descendant who neither predeceased the distribution date nor is considered to have predeceased the distribution date under Section 75-2-702.

(2) If an applicable statute or a governing instrument calls for property to be distributed or taken "per capita at each generation," the property is divided into as many equal shares as there are:

- (a) surviving descendants in the generation nearest to the designated ancestor which contains one or more surviving descendants; and
- (b) deceased descendants in the same generation who left surviving descendants, if any. Each surviving descendant in the nearest generation is allocated one share. The remaining shares, if any, are combined and then divided in the same manner among the surviving descendants of the deceased descendants as if the surviving descendants who were allocated a share and their surviving descendants had predeceased the distribution date.

(3) If a governing instrument calls for property to be distributed or taken "per stirpes," "by representation," or "by right of representation," the property is divided into as many equal shares as there are:

- (a) surviving children of the designated ancestor; and
- (b) deceased children who left surviving descendants. Each surviving child, if any, is allocated one share. The share of each deceased child with surviving descendants is divided in the same manner, with subdivision repeating at each succeeding generation until the property is fully allocated among surviving descendants.

(4) If a governing instrument calls for property to be distributed or taken "per capita," "share and share alike," or "to the survivor of them," the property is divided into as many equal shares as there are living persons named on the distribution date.

(5) For the purposes of Subsections (2) and (3), an individual who is deceased and left no surviving descendant is disregarded, and an individual who leaves a surviving ancestor who is a descendant of the designated ancestor is not entitled to a share.

Amended by Chapter 350, 2011 General Session

75-2-710 Worthier-title doctrine abolished.

The doctrine of worthier title is abolished as a rule of law and as a rule of construction. Language in a governing instrument describing the beneficiaries of a disposition as the transferor's "heirs," "heirs-at-law," "next-of-kin," "distributees," "relatives," or "family," or language of similar import, does not create or presumptively create a reversionary interest in the transferor.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session

75-2-711 Interests in "heirs" and like.

If an applicable statute or a governing instrument calls for a present or future distribution to or creates a present or future interest in a designated individual's "heirs," "heirs-at-law," "next-of-kin," "relatives," or "family," or language of similar import, the property passes to those persons, including the state, and in such shares as would succeed to the designated individual's intestate estate under the intestate succession law of the designated individual's domicile if the designated individual died when the disposition is to take effect in possession or enjoyment. If the designated individual's surviving spouse is living but is remarried at the time the disposition is to take effect in possession or enjoyment, the surviving spouse is not an heir of the designated individual.

Enacted by Chapter 39, 1998 General Session