

ALIMONY MODIFICATIONS

2011 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Stephen E. Sandstrom

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill expands the factors a court shall consider when determining alimony.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ requires the court to consider certain types of fault when determining alimony; and
- ▶ allows a court to order additional alimony to allow a recipient spouse to care and supervise minor children.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

30-3-5, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2010, Chapter 285

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **30-3-5** is amended to read:

30-3-5. Disposition of property -- Maintenance and health care of parties and children -- Division of debts -- Court to have continuing jurisdiction -- Custody and parent-time -- Determination of alimony -- Nonmeritorious petition for modification.



28 (1) When a decree of divorce is rendered, the court may include in it equitable orders
29 relating to the children, property, debts or obligations, and parties. The court shall include the
30 following in every decree of divorce:

31 (a) an order assigning responsibility for the payment of reasonable and necessary
32 medical and dental expenses of the dependent children including responsibility for health
33 insurance out-of-pocket expenses such as co-payments, co-insurance, and deductibles;

34 (b) (i) if coverage is or becomes available at a reasonable cost, an order requiring the
35 purchase and maintenance of appropriate health, hospital, and dental care insurance for the
36 dependent children; and

37 (ii) a designation of which health, hospital, or dental insurance plan is primary and
38 which health, hospital, or dental insurance plan is secondary in accordance with the provisions
39 of Section 30-3-5.4 which will take effect if at any time a dependent child is covered by both
40 parents' health, hospital, or dental insurance plans;

41 (c) pursuant to Section 15-4-6.5:

42 (i) an order specifying which party is responsible for the payment of joint debts,
43 obligations, or liabilities of the parties contracted or incurred during marriage;

44 (ii) an order requiring the parties to notify respective creditors or obligees, regarding
45 the court's division of debts, obligations, or liabilities and regarding the parties' separate,
46 current addresses; and

47 (iii) provisions for the enforcement of these orders; and

48 (d) provisions for income withholding in accordance with Title 62A, Chapter 11,
49 Recovery Services.

50 (2) The court may include, in an order determining child support, an order assigning
51 financial responsibility for all or a portion of child care expenses incurred on behalf of the
52 dependent children, necessitated by the employment or training of the custodial parent. If the
53 court determines that the circumstances are appropriate and that the dependent children would
54 be adequately cared for, it may include an order allowing the noncustodial parent to provide
55 child care for the dependent children, necessitated by the employment or training of the
56 custodial parent.

57 (3) The court has continuing jurisdiction to make subsequent changes or new orders for
58 the custody of the children and their support, maintenance, health, and dental care, and for

59 distribution of the property and obligations for debts as is reasonable and necessary.

60 (4) Child support, custody, visitation, and other matters related to children born to the
61 mother and father after entry of the decree of divorce may be added to the decree by
62 modification.

63 (5) (a) In determining parent-time rights of parents and visitation rights of grandparents
64 and other members of the immediate family, the court shall consider the best interest of the
65 child.

66 (b) Upon a specific finding by the court of the need for peace officer enforcement, the
67 court may include in an order establishing a parent-time or visitation schedule a provision,
68 among other things, authorizing any peace officer to enforce a court-ordered parent-time or
69 visitation schedule entered under this chapter.

70 (6) If a petition for modification of child custody or parent-time provisions of a court
71 order is made and denied, the court shall order the petitioner to pay the reasonable attorneys'
72 fees expended by the prevailing party in that action, if the court determines that the petition
73 was without merit and not asserted or defended against in good faith.

74 (7) If a petition alleges noncompliance with a parent-time order by a parent, or a
75 visitation order by a grandparent or other member of the immediate family where a visitation or
76 parent-time right has been previously granted by the court, the court may award to the
77 prevailing party costs, including actual attorney fees and court costs incurred by the prevailing
78 party because of the other party's failure to provide or exercise court-ordered visitation or
79 parent-time.

80 (8) (a) The court shall consider at least the following factors in determining alimony:

81 (i) the financial condition and needs of the recipient spouse;

82 (ii) the recipient's earning capacity or ability to produce income;

83 (iii) the ability of the payor spouse to provide support;

84 (iv) the length of the marriage;

85 (v) whether the recipient spouse has custody of minor children requiring support, and if
86 so, whether the payor has the ability to provide sufficient support to allow the recipient spouse
87 to be in the home to supervise and care for the minor children when they are not in school;

88 (vi) whether the recipient spouse worked in a business owned or operated by the payor
89 spouse; [~~and~~]

90 (vii) whether the recipient spouse directly contributed to any increase in the payor
91 spouse's skill by paying for education received by the payor spouse or allowing the payor
92 spouse to attend school during the marriage[-]; and

93 (viii) whether the recipient spouse refrained from full-time employment in order to
94 provide full-time care of minor children and the parties' household during the marriage.

95 (b) The court [~~may~~] shall consider the fault of the parties in determining alimony[-],
96 including whether either party:

97 (i) engaged in behavior during the marriage that unilaterally compromised the marital
98 contract;

99 (ii) jeopardized the financial stability of the family;

100 (iii) committed an act of substantiated physical abuse on the spouse or children;

101 (iv) has had a substantiated long-term addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or
102 pornography; or

103 (v) engaged in criminal behavior.

104 (c) As a general rule, the court should look to the standard of living, existing at the
105 time of separation, in determining alimony in accordance with Subsection (8)(a). However, the
106 court shall consider all relevant facts and equitable principles and may, in its discretion, base
107 alimony on the standard of living that existed at the time of trial. In marriages of short
108 duration, when no children have been conceived or born during the marriage, the court may
109 consider the standard of living that existed at the time of the marriage.

110 (d) The court may, under appropriate circumstances, attempt to equalize the parties'
111 respective standards of living.

112 (e) When a marriage of long duration dissolves on the threshold of a major change in
113 the income of one of the spouses due to the collective efforts of both, that change shall be
114 considered in dividing the marital property and in determining the amount of alimony. If one
115 spouse's earning capacity has been greatly enhanced through the efforts of both spouses during
116 the marriage, the court may make a compensating adjustment in dividing the marital property
117 and awarding alimony.

118 (f) In determining alimony when a marriage of short duration dissolves, and no
119 children have been conceived or born during the marriage, the court may consider restoring
120 each party to the condition which existed at the time of the marriage.

121 (g) (i) The court has continuing jurisdiction to make substantive changes and new
122 orders regarding alimony based on a substantial material change in circumstances not
123 foreseeable at the time of the divorce.

124 (ii) The court may not modify alimony or issue a new order for alimony to address
125 needs of the recipient that did not exist at the time the decree was entered, unless the court
126 finds extenuating circumstances that justify that action.

127 (iii) In determining alimony, the income of any subsequent spouse of the payor may not
128 be considered, except as provided in this Subsection (8).

129 (A) The court may consider the subsequent spouse's financial ability to share living
130 expenses.

131 (B) The court may consider the income of a subsequent spouse if the court finds that
132 the payor's improper conduct justifies that consideration.

133 (h) Alimony may not be ordered for a duration longer than the number of years that the
134 marriage existed unless, at any time prior to termination of alimony, the court finds extenuating
135 circumstances that justify the payment of alimony for a longer period of time.

136 (9) Unless a decree of divorce specifically provides otherwise, any order of the court
137 that a party pay alimony to a former spouse automatically terminates upon the remarriage or
138 death of that former spouse. However, if the remarriage is annulled and found to be void ab
139 initio, payment of alimony shall resume if the party paying alimony is made a party to the
140 action of annulment and his rights are determined.

141 (10) Any order of the court that a party pay alimony to a former spouse terminates
142 upon establishment by the party paying alimony that the former spouse is cohabitating with
143 another person.

Legislative Review Note
as of 2-18-11 2:48 PM

Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel

FISCAL NOTE

H.B. 491

SHORT TITLE: **Alimony Modifications**

SPONSOR: **Sandstrom, S.**

2011 GENERAL SESSION, STATE OF UTAH

STATE GOVERNMENT (UCA 36-12-13(2)(b))

Enactment of this bill will cost the Courts \$537,900 in ongoing General Funds for the additional workload.

STATE BUDGET DETAIL TABLE

	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Expenditure:			
General Fund	\$0	\$537,900	\$537,900
Total Expenditure	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$537,900</u>	<u>\$537,900</u>
Net Impact, All Funds (Rev.-Exp.)	<u>\$0</u>	<u>(\$537,900)</u>	<u>(\$537,900)</u>
Net Impact, General/Education Funds	\$0	(\$537,900)	(\$537,900)

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (UCA 36-12-13(2)(c))

Enactment of this bill likely will not result in direct, measurable costs for local governments.

DIRECT EXPENDITURES BY UTAH RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES (UCA 36-12-13(2)(d))

Enactment of this bill likely will not result in direct, measurable expenditures by Utah residents or businesses.