
HOUSE BILL 1876

State of Washington

59th Legislature

2005 Regular Session

By Representatives Green, Haler, Moeller, Darneille, Haigh, Miloscia and Upthegrove

Read first time 02/09/2005. Referred to Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability.

1 AN ACT Relating to the voting rights of persons under guardianship;
2 amending RCW 11.88.010 and 11.88.010; creating a new section; providing
3 an effective date; and providing an expiration date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the right to vote
6 is a fundamental liberty and that this liberty should not be
7 confiscated without due process. When the state chooses to use
8 guardianship proceedings as the basis for the denial of a fundamental
9 liberty, an individual is entitled to basic procedural protections that
10 will ensure fundamental fairness. These basic procedural protections
11 should include clear notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard.
12 The legislature further finds that the state has a compelling interest
13 in ensuring that those who cast a ballot understand the nature and
14 effect of voting is an individual decision, and that any restriction of
15 voting rights imposed through guardianship proceedings should be
16 narrowly tailored to meet this compelling interest.

17 **Sec. 2.** RCW 11.88.010 and 1991 c 289 s 1 are each amended to read
18 as follows:

1 (1) The superior court of each county shall have power to appoint
2 guardians for the persons and/or estates of incapacitated persons, and
3 guardians for the estates of nonresidents of the state who have
4 property in the county needing care and attention.

5 (a) For purposes of this chapter, a person may be deemed
6 incapacitated as to person when the superior court determines the
7 individual has a significant risk of personal harm based upon a
8 demonstrated inability to adequately provide for nutrition, health,
9 housing, or physical safety.

10 (b) For purposes of this chapter, a person may be deemed
11 incapacitated as to the person's estate when the superior court
12 determines the individual is at significant risk of financial harm
13 based upon a demonstrated inability to adequately manage property or
14 financial affairs.

15 (c) A determination of incapacity is a legal not a medical
16 decision, based upon a demonstration of management insufficiencies over
17 time in the area of person or estate. Age, eccentricity, poverty, or
18 medical diagnosis alone shall not be sufficient to justify a finding of
19 incapacity.

20 (d) A person may also be determined incapacitated if he or she is
21 under the age of majority as defined in RCW 26.28.010.

22 (e) For purposes of giving informed consent for health care
23 pursuant to RCW 7.70.050 and 7.70.065, an "incompetent" person is any
24 person who is (i) incompetent by reason of mental illness,
25 developmental disability, senility, habitual drunkenness, excessive use
26 of drugs, or other mental incapacity, of either managing his or her
27 property or caring for himself or herself, or both, or (ii)
28 incapacitated as defined in (a), (b), or (d) of this subsection.

29 (f) For purposes of the terms "incompetent," "disabled," or "not
30 legally competent," as those terms are used in the Revised Code of
31 Washington to apply to persons incapacitated under this chapter, those
32 terms shall be interpreted to mean "incapacitated" persons for purposes
33 of this chapter.

34 (2) The superior court for each county shall have power to appoint
35 limited guardians for the persons and estates, or either thereof, of
36 incapacitated persons, who by reason of their incapacity have need for
37 protection and assistance, but who are capable of managing some of
38 their personal and financial affairs. After considering all evidence

1 presented as a result of such investigation, the court shall impose, by
2 order, only such specific limitations and restrictions on an
3 incapacitated person to be placed under a limited guardianship as the
4 court finds necessary for such person's protection and assistance. A
5 person shall not be presumed to be incapacitated nor shall a person
6 lose any legal rights or suffer any legal disabilities as the result of
7 being placed under a limited guardianship, except as to those rights
8 and disabilities specifically set forth in the court order establishing
9 such a limited guardianship. In addition, the court order shall state
10 the period of time for which it shall be applicable.

11 (3) Venue for petitions for guardianship or limited guardianship
12 shall lie in the county wherein the alleged incapacitated person is
13 domiciled, or if such person resides in a facility supported in whole
14 or in part by local, state, or federal funding sources, in either the
15 county where the facility is located, the county of domicile prior to
16 residence in the supported facility, or the county where a parent or
17 spouse of the alleged incapacitated person is domiciled.

18 If the alleged incapacitated person's residency has changed within
19 one year of the filing of the petition, any interested person may move
20 for a change of venue for any proceedings seeking the appointment of a
21 guardian or a limited guardian under this chapter to the county of the
22 alleged incapacitated person's last place of residence of one year or
23 more. The motion shall be granted when it appears to the court that
24 such venue would be in the best interests of the alleged incapacitated
25 person and would promote more complete consideration of all relevant
26 matters.

27 (4) Under RCW 11.94.010, a principal may nominate, by a durable
28 power of attorney, the guardian or limited guardian of his or her
29 estate or person for consideration by the court if guardianship
30 proceedings for the principal's person or estate are thereafter
31 commenced. The court shall make its appointment in accordance with the
32 principal's most recent nomination in a durable power of attorney
33 except for good cause or disqualification.

34 ~~(5) ((When a court imposes a full guardianship for an incapacitated~~
35 ~~person, the person shall be considered incompetent for purposes of~~
36 ~~rationaly exercising the right to vote and shall lose the right to~~
37 ~~vote, unless the court specifically finds that the person is rationally~~
38 ~~capable of exercising the franchise.)) Imposition of a ((limited))~~

1 guardianship for an incapacitated person shall not result in the loss
2 of the right to vote unless the court determines that the person is
3 incompetent for purposes of rationally exercising the franchise in that
4 the individual lacks the capacity to understand the nature and effect
5 of voting such that she or he cannot make an individual choice.

6 **Sec. 3.** RCW 11.88.010 and 2004 c 267 s 139 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The superior court of each county shall have power to appoint
9 guardians for the persons and/or estates of incapacitated persons, and
10 guardians for the estates of nonresidents of the state who have
11 property in the county needing care and attention.

12 (a) For purposes of this chapter, a person may be deemed
13 incapacitated as to person when the superior court determines the
14 individual has a significant risk of personal harm based upon a
15 demonstrated inability to adequately provide for nutrition, health,
16 housing, or physical safety.

17 (b) For purposes of this chapter, a person may be deemed
18 incapacitated as to the person's estate when the superior court
19 determines the individual is at significant risk of financial harm
20 based upon a demonstrated inability to adequately manage property or
21 financial affairs.

22 (c) A determination of incapacity is a legal not a medical
23 decision, based upon a demonstration of management insufficiencies over
24 time in the area of person or estate. Age, eccentricity, poverty, or
25 medical diagnosis alone shall not be sufficient to justify a finding of
26 incapacity.

27 (d) A person may also be determined incapacitated if he or she is
28 under the age of majority as defined in RCW 26.28.010.

29 (e) For purposes of giving informed consent for health care
30 pursuant to RCW 7.70.050 and 7.70.065, an "incompetent" person is any
31 person who is (i) incompetent by reason of mental illness,
32 developmental disability, senility, habitual drunkenness, excessive use
33 of drugs, or other mental incapacity, of either managing his or her
34 property or caring for himself or herself, or both, or (ii)
35 incapacitated as defined in (a), (b), or (d) of this subsection.

36 (f) For purposes of the terms "incompetent," "disabled," or "not
37 legally competent," as those terms are used in the Revised Code of

1 Washington to apply to persons incapacitated under this chapter, those
2 terms shall be interpreted to mean "incapacitated" persons for purposes
3 of this chapter.

4 (2) The superior court for each county shall have power to appoint
5 limited guardians for the persons and estates, or either thereof, of
6 incapacitated persons, who by reason of their incapacity have need for
7 protection and assistance, but who are capable of managing some of
8 their personal and financial affairs. After considering all evidence
9 presented as a result of such investigation, the court shall impose, by
10 order, only such specific limitations and restrictions on an
11 incapacitated person to be placed under a limited guardianship as the
12 court finds necessary for such person's protection and assistance. A
13 person shall not be presumed to be incapacitated nor shall a person
14 lose any legal rights or suffer any legal disabilities as the result of
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16 and disabilities specifically set forth in the court order establishing
17 such a limited guardianship. In addition, the court order shall state
18 the period of time for which it shall be applicable.

19 (3) Venue for petitions for guardianship or limited guardianship
20 shall lie in the county wherein the alleged incapacitated person is
21 domiciled, or if such person resides in a facility supported in whole
22 or in part by local, state, or federal funding sources, in either the
23 county where the facility is located, the county of domicile prior to
24 residence in the supported facility, or the county where a parent or
25 spouse of the alleged incapacitated person is domiciled.

26 If the alleged incapacitated person's residency has changed within
27 one year of the filing of the petition, any interested person may move
28 for a change of venue for any proceedings seeking the appointment of a
29 guardian or a limited guardian under this chapter to the county of the
30 alleged incapacitated person's last place of residence of one year or
31 more. The motion shall be granted when it appears to the court that
32 such venue would be in the best interests of the alleged incapacitated
33 person and would promote more complete consideration of all relevant
34 matters.

35 (4) Under RCW 11.94.010, a principal may nominate, by a durable
36 power of attorney, the guardian or limited guardian of his or her
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38 proceedings for the principal's person or estate are thereafter

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2 principal's most recent nomination in a durable power of attorney
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8 ~~capable of exercising the franchise.))~~ Imposition of a ((limited))
9 guardianship for an incapacitated person shall not result in the loss
10 of the right to vote unless the court determines that the person is
11 incompetent for purposes of rationaly exercising the franchise in that
12 the individual lacks the capacity to understand the nature and effect
13 of voting such that she or he cannot make an individual choice. When
14 a court determines that the person is incompetent for the purpose of
15 rationaly exercising the right to vote, the court shall notify the
16 appropriate county auditor.

17 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. Section 2 of this act expires January 1,
18 2006.

19 NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. Section 3 of this act takes effect January
20 1, 2006.

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