

House Bill 672

By: Representative Willard of the 49th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Code Section 53-1-20 and Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 53 of the Official Code
2 of Georgia Annotated, the Revised Probate Code of 1998, relating, respectively, to
3 renouncing succession and to general provisions relative to descent and distribution, so as
4 to correct a cross-reference; to provide for forfeiture of an intestate share of an estate under
5 certain circumstances; to provide for definitions; to provide for notice of proceedings; to
6 provide for an appointment of a guardian ad litem under certain circumstances; to provide
7 for judicial proceedings and standard of proof; to change certain provisions relating to the
8 rules of inheritance when a decedent dies without a will; to provide for related matters; to
9 provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

11 **SECTION 1.**

12 Code Section 53-1-20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to renouncing
13 succession, is amended by striking subsection (f) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

14 "(f)(1) Except as otherwise provided by the will or other governing instrument, a
15 renunciation shall cause the renounced property to pass as if the person renouncing had
16 predeceased the decedent or, in the case of property passing upon exercise of a power of
17 appointment, as if the person renouncing had predeceased the holder of the power, even
18 if the acceleration of a contingent remainder or other interest results. A will or other
19 governing instrument may otherwise provide expressly or by implication, but the fact that
20 a remainder or other future interest following a renounced interest is conditioned upon
21 surviving the holder of such renounced interest shall not, without more, be sufficient to
22 indicate that such conditioned interest should not accelerate by reason of such
23 renunciation. Notwithstanding the foregoing, solely for the purposes of the last clause
24 of paragraph (5) and the last clause of paragraph (7) of subsection ~~(b)~~ (c) of Code Section
25 53-2-1, any individual renouncing who is the only sibling or the only aunt or uncle
26 surviving the decedent shall not be deemed to have predeceased the decedent.

- 1 (2) Renounced property that is the subject of an attempted outright gift shall be treated
 2 as an incomplete gift.
- 3 (3) A renounced power over property shall be treated as if such power had not been
 4 created with respect to the person renouncing such power.
- 5 (4) The expression in a renunciation of an intent or desire that the property pass to
 6 certain persons shall be considered merely precatory and shall have no legal effect unless
 7 specifically declared to be a condition of the renunciation."

8 **SECTION 2.**

9 Article 1 of Chapter 2 of Title 53, the Revised Probate Code of 1998, relating to general
 10 provisions relative to descent and distribution, is amended in Code Section 53-2-1, relating
 11 to rules of inheritance when a decedent dies without a will, by striking the Code section in
 12 its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

13 "53-2-1.

14 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

15 (1) 'Abandoned' means that a parent of a minor child, without justifiable cause, failed to
 16 communicate with the minor child, care for the minor child, and provide for the minor
 17 child's support as required by law or judicial decree for a period of at least one year
 18 immediately prior to the date of the death of the minor.

19 (2) 'Minor child' means a person who is less than 18 years of age.

20 ~~(a)~~(b) For purposes of this Code section:

21 (1) Children of the decedent who are born after the decedent's death are considered
 22 children in being at the decedent's death, provided they were conceived prior to the
 23 decedent's death, were born within ten months of the decedent's death, and survived 120
 24 hours or more after birth; and

25 (2) The half-blood, whether on the maternal or paternal side, are considered equally with
 26 the whole-blood, so that the children of any common parent are treated as brothers and
 27 sisters to each other.

28 ~~(b)~~(c) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this Code section, when ~~When~~ a decedent
 29 died without a will, the following rules shall determine such decedent's heirs:

30 (1) Upon the death of an individual who is survived by a spouse but not by any child or
 31 other descendant, the spouse is the sole heir. If the decedent is also survived by any child
 32 or other descendant, the spouse shall share equally with the children, with the
 33 descendants of any deceased child taking that child's share, per stirpes; provided,
 34 however, that the spouse's portion shall not be less than a one-third share;

1 (2) If the decedent is not survived by a spouse, the heirs shall be those relatives, as
 2 provided in this Code section, who are in the nearest degree to the decedent in which
 3 there is any survivor;

4 (3) Children of the decedent are in the first degree, and those who survive the decedent
 5 shall share the estate equally, with the descendants of any deceased child taking, per
 6 stirpes, the share that child would have taken if in life;

7 (4) Parents of the decedent are in the second degree, and those who survive the decedent
 8 shall share the estate equally;

9 (5) Siblings of the decedent are in the third degree, and those who survive the decedent
 10 shall share the estate equally, with the descendants of any deceased sibling taking, per
 11 stirpes, the share that sibling would have taken if in life; provided, however, that, subject
 12 to the provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection (f) of Code Section 53-1-20, if no sibling
 13 survives the decedent, the nieces and nephews who survive the decedent shall take the
 14 estate in equal shares, with the descendants of any deceased niece or nephew taking, per
 15 stirpes, the share that niece or nephew would have taken if in life;

16 (6) Grandparents of the decedent are in the fourth degree, and those who survive the
 17 decedent shall share the estate equally;

18 (7) Uncles and aunts of the decedent are in the fifth degree, and those who survive the
 19 decedent shall share the estate equally, with the children of any deceased uncle or aunt
 20 taking, per stirpes, the share that uncle or aunt would have taken if in life; provided,
 21 however, that, subject to the provisions of paragraph (1) of subsection (f) of Code Section
 22 53-1-20, if no uncle or aunt of the decedent survives the decedent, the first cousins who
 23 survive the decedent shall share the estate equally; and

24 (8) The more remote degrees of kinship shall be determined by counting the number of
 25 steps in the chain from the relative to the closest common ancestor of the relative and
 26 decedent and the number of steps in the chain from the common ancestor to the decedent.
 27 The sum of the steps in the two chains shall be the degree of kinship, and the surviving
 28 relatives with the lowest sum shall be in the nearest degree and shall share the estate
 29 equally.

30 (d) Except as provided in Code Sections 19-7-1 and 51-4-4 for the right of recovery for
 31 the wrongful death of a child, when a minor child dies without a will, a parent who
 32 willfully abandons his or her minor child and continues such abandonment until the death
 33 of the minor child shall lose all right to intestate succession to the minor child's estate and
 34 shall not have the right to administer the minor child's estate unless the abandoning parent
 35 resumes the parental relationship with the minor child at least one year prior to the minor
 36 child's death and continues the parental relationship until the death of the minor child. A
 37 parent who has been deprived of the custody of his or her minor child under an order of a

1 court of competent jurisdiction and who has substantially complied with the support
2 requirements of the order shall not be barred from inheriting from the minor child's estate.

3 (e) For cases in which abandonment is alleged, the moving party shall file a motion with
4 the probate court requesting the judge to determine the issue of abandonment and shall
5 serve all parties as set forth in subsection (f) of this Code section. A hearing shall be
6 conducted and all parties shall have the opportunity to present evidence regarding the
7 party's relationship with the decedent. The burden of proof to show an abandonment is on
8 the person asserting the abandonment by clear and convincing evidence. The judge's
9 decision shall not be disturbed absent an abuse of discretion.

10 (f) All parties to a motion filed pursuant to subsection (e) of this Code section shall be
11 served in accordance with Chapter 11 of this title, the Revised Probate Code of 1998. If a
12 party cannot be personally served and the party's interest in an estate is subject to forfeiture
13 pursuant to subsection (d) of this Code section, the judge shall appoint a guardian ad litem
14 for the party. If a party cannot be personally served, the citation shall also be published in
15 the newspaper in which sheriff's advertisements are published in the county where the
16 party was last known to reside.

17 (g) In the event that a parent is disqualified from taking a distributive share in the estate
18 of a decedent under subsection (d) of this Code section, the estate of such decedent shall
19 be distributed in accordance with subsection (c) of this Code section as though the parent
20 had predeceased the decedent."

21 **SECTION 3.**

22 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2005.

23 **SECTION 4.**

24 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.