

**CHAPTER 30.1-10  
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**30.1-10-01. (2-801) Disclaimer of property interests.**

Repealed by S.L. 2001, ch. 301, § 3.

**30.1-10-02. (2-802) Effect of divorce, annulment, and decree of separation.**

1. An individual who is divorced from the decedent or whose marriage to the decedent has been annulled is not a surviving spouse unless, by virtue of a subsequent marriage, the spouse is married to the decedent at the time of death. A decree of separation that does not terminate the status of husband and wife is not a divorce for purposes of this section.
2. For purposes of chapters 30.1-04 through 30.1-07 and section 30.1-13-03, a surviving spouse does not include:
  - a. An individual who obtains or consents to a final decree or judgment of divorce from the decedent or an annulment of their marriage, which decree or judgment is not recognized as valid in this state, unless subsequently that participate in a marriage ceremony purporting to marry each to the other or live together as husband and wife;
  - b. An individual who, following an invalid decree or judgment of divorce or annulment obtained by the decedent, participates in a marriage ceremony with a third individual; or
  - c. An individual who was a party to a valid proceeding concluded by an order purporting to terminate all marital property rights.

**30.1-10-03. (2-803) Effect of homicide on intestate succession, wills, trusts, joint assets, life insurance, and beneficiary designations.**

1. In this section:
  - a. "Disposition or appointment of property" includes a transfer of an item of property or any other benefit to a beneficiary designated in a governing instrument.
  - b. "Governing instrument" means a governing instrument executed by the decedent.
  - c. "Revocable", with respect to a disposition, appointment, provision, or nomination, means one under which the decedent, at the time of or immediately before death, was alone empowered, by law or under the governing instrument, to cancel the designation, in favor of the killer, whether or not the decedent was then empowered to designate the decedent in place of the decedent's killer or the decedent then had capacity to exercise the power.
2. An individual who intentionally and feloniously kills the decedent forfeits all benefits under this title with respect to the decedent's estate, including an intestate share, an elective share, an omitted spouse's or child's share, a homestead allowance, exempt property, and a family allowance. If the decedent died intestate, the decedent's intestate estate passes as if the killer disclaimed the killer's intestate share.
3. The intentional and felonious killing of the decedent:
  - a. Revokes any revocable disposition or appointment of property made by the decedent to the killer in a governing instrument, provision in a governing instrument conferring a general or nongeneral power of appointment on the killer, and nomination of the killer in a governing instrument, nominating or appointing the killer to serve in any fiduciary or representative capacity, including a personal representative, executor, trustee, or agent.
  - b. Voids the interests of the killer in property held with the decedent at the time of the killing as joint tenants with the right of survivorship.
4. The voided interest under subdivision b of subsection 3 does not affect any third-party interest in property acquired for value and in good-faith reliance on an apparent title by survivorship in the killer unless a writing declaring the voided interest has been noted, registered, filed, or recorded in records appropriate to the kind and location of the

- property that are relied upon, in the ordinary course of transactions involving the property, as evidence of ownership.
5. Provisions of a governing instrument are given effect as if the killer disclaimed all revoked provisions revoked by this section or, in the case of a revoked nomination in a fiduciary or representative capacity, as if the killer predeceased the decedent.
  6. A wrongful acquisition of property or interest by a killer not covered by this section must be treated in accordance with the principle that a killer cannot profit from any wrong.
  7. After all right to appeal has been exhausted, a judgment of conviction establishing criminal accountability for the felonious and intentional killing of the decedent conclusively establishes the convicted individual as the decedent's killer for purposes of this section. In the absence of a conviction, the court, upon the petition of an interested person, must determine whether, under the preponderance of evidence standard, the individual would be found criminally accountable for the felonious and intentional killing of the decedent. If the court determines that, under that standard, the individual would be found criminally accountable for the felonious and intentional killing of the decedent, the determination conclusively establishes that individual as the decedent's killer for purposes of this section.
  8.
    - a. A payer 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 affected by an intentional and felonious killing, or for having taken any other action in reliance on the validity of the governing instrument, upon request and satisfactory proof of the decedent's death, before the payer or other third party received written notice of a claimed forfeiture or revocation under this section. A payer or other third party does not have a duty or obligation to make any determination as to whether the decedent was a victim of a felonious killing or to seek any evidence with respect to a felonious killing even if the circumstances of the decedent's death are suspicious or questionable as to the beneficiary's participation in any such felonious killing. A payer or other third party is only liable for actions taken two or more business days after the actual receipt by the payer or other third party of written notice. The payer or other third party may be liable for actions taken pursuant to the governing instrument only if the form of service is that described in subdivision b.
    - b. The written notice must indicate the name of the decedent, the name of the person asserting an interest, the nature of the payment or item of property or other benefit, and a statement that a claim of forfeiture or revocation is being made under this section. Written notice of a claimed forfeiture or revocation under this subsection must be mailed to the payer's or third party's main office or home by registered mail or served upon the payer or other third party in the same manner as a summons in a civil action. Notice to a sales representative of the payer or other third party does not constitute notice to the payer or other third party. Upon receipt of written notice of a claimed forfeiture or revocation under this section, a payer 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 decedents' estates located in the county of the decedent's residence. In addition to the actions available under this section, the payer or other third party may take any action authorized by law or the governing instrument. If no probate proceedings have been commenced, the payer or other third party shall file with the court a copy of the written notice received by the payer or other third party, with the payment of funds or transfer or deposit of property. The court may not charge a filing fee to the payer or other third party for the payment to the court of amounts owed or transferred to or deposit with the court of any item of property, even if no probate proceedings have been commenced before the payment, transfer, or deposit. 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. A filing fee, if any, may be charged upon disbursement either to the recipient or against the funds or property on deposit with the court, in the discretion of the court. Payments, transfers, or deposits made to or with the court discharge the payer 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.

9. a. A bona fide purchaser who purchases property, 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 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, other than the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended, 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.

**30.1-10-04. (2-804) Revocation of probate and nonprobate transfers by divorce - No revocation by other changes of circumstances.**

1. In this section:
  - a. "Disposition or appointment of property" includes a transfer of an item of property or any other benefit to a beneficiary designated in a governing instrument.
  - b. "Divorce or annulment" means any divorce or annulment, or any dissolution or declaration of invalidity of a marriage, that would exclude the spouse as a surviving spouse within the meaning of section 30.1-10-02. A decree of separation that does not terminate the status of husband and wife is not a divorce for purposes of this section.
  - c. "Divorced individual" includes an individual whose marriage has been annulled.
  - d. "Governing instrument" means a governing instrument executed by the divorced individual before the divorce or annulment of the marriage to the former spouse.
  - e. "Relative of the divorced individual's former spouse" means an individual who is related to the divorced individual's former spouse by blood, adoption, or affinity and who, after the divorce or annulment, is not related to the divorced individual by blood, adoption, or affinity.
  - f. "Revocable", with respect to a disposition, appointment, provision, or nomination means one under which the divorced individual, at the time of the divorce or annulment, was alone empowered, by law or under the governing instrument, to cancel the designation in favor of the former spouse or former spouse's relative, whether or not the divorced individual was then empowered to designate the divorced individual in place of the former spouse or in place of the former spouse's relative and whether or not the divorced individual then had the capacity to exercise the power.
2. Except as provided by the express terms of a governing instrument, a court order, or a contract relating to the division of the marital estate made between the divorced individuals before or after the marriage, divorce, or annulment, the divorce or annulment of a marriage:

- a. Revokes any revocable disposition or appointment of property made by a divorced individual to the individual's former spouse in a governing instrument and any disposition or appointment created by law or in a governing instrument to a relative of the divorced individual's former spouse, provision in a governing instrument conferring a general or special power of appointment on the divorced individual's former spouse or on a relative of the divorced individual's former spouse, and nomination in a governing instrument, nominating a divorced individual's former spouse or a relative of the divorced individual's former spouse to serve in any fiduciary or representative capacity, including a personal representative, executor, trustee, conservator, agent, or guardian.
  - b. Severs the interests of the former spouses in property held by them at the time of the divorce or annulment as joint tenants with the right of survivorship, transforming the interests of former spouses into equal tenancies in common.
3. A severance under subdivision b of subsection 2 does not affect any third-party interest in property acquired for value and in good-faith reliance on an apparent title by survivorship in the survivor of the former spouses unless a writing declaring the severance has been noted, registered, filed, or recorded in records appropriate to the kind and location of the property which are relied upon, in the ordinary course of transactions involving such property, as evidence of ownership.
4. Provisions of a governing instrument are given effect as if the former spouse and relatives of the former spouse disclaimed all provisions revoked by this section or, in the case of a revoked nomination in a fiduciary or representative capacity, as if the former spouse and relatives of the former spouse died immediately before the divorce or annulment.
5. Provisions revoked solely by this section are revived by the divorced individual's remarriage to the former spouse or by a nullification of the divorce or annulment.
6. No change of circumstances other than as described in this section and in section 30.1-10-03 effects a revocation.
7.
  - a. A payer 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 affected by a divorce, annulment, or remarriage, or for having taken any other action in reliance on the validity of the governing instrument, before the payer or other third party received written notice of the divorce, annulment, or remarriage. A payer or other third party does not have a duty or obligation to inquire as to the continued marital relationship between the decedent and a beneficiary or to seek any evidence with respect to a marital relationship. A payer or other third party is only liable for actions taken two or more business days after the actual receipt by the payer or other third party of written notice. The payer or other third party may be liable for actions taken pursuant to the governing instrument only if the form of service is that described in subdivision b.
  - b. The written notice must indicate the name of the decedent, the name of the person asserting an interest, the nature of the payment or item of property or other benefit, and a statement that a divorce, annulment, or remarriage of the decedent and the designated beneficiary occurred. Written notice of the divorce, annulment, or remarriage under this subdivision must be mailed to the payer's or other third party's main office or home by registered mail or served upon the payer or other third party in the same manner as a summons in a civil action. Upon receipt of written notice of the divorce, annulment, or remarriage, a payer 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 decedents' estates located in the county of the decedent's residence. In addition to the actions available under this section, the payer or other third party may take any action authorized by law or the governing instrument. If no probate proceedings have been commenced, the payer or other third party shall

file with the court a copy of the written notice received by the payer or other third party with the payment of funds or transfer or deposit of property. The court may not charge a filing fee to the payer or other third party for the payment to the court of amounts owed or transferred to or deposit with the court of any item of property, even if no probate proceedings have been commenced before the payment, transfer, or deposit. The court shall hold the funds or item of property and, upon its determination under this section, shall order disbursement or transfer in accordance with the determination. A filing fee, if any, may be charged upon disbursement either to the recipient or against the funds or property on deposit with the court, in the discretion of the court. Payments, transfers, or deposits made to or with the court discharge the payer 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.

8. a. A bona fide purchaser who purchases property from a former spouse, relative of a former spouse, or any other person, or who receives from a former spouse, relative of a former spouse, or any other person 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 liable under this section for the amount of the payment or the value of the item of property or benefit. But a former spouse, relative of a former spouse, or other person who, not for value, received a payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which that 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, other than the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended, with respect to a payment, an item of property, or any other benefit covered by this section, a former spouse, relative of the former spouse, or any other person who, not for value, received a payment, item of property, or any other benefit to which that person is not entitled under this section is obligated to return that 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.

**30.1-10-05. (2-805) Reformation to correct mistakes.**

The court may reform the terms of a governing instrument, even if unambiguous, to conform the terms to the transferor's intention if it is proved by clear and convincing evidence that the transferor's intent and the terms of the governing instrument were affected by a mistake of fact or law, whether in expression or inducement.

**30.1-10-06. (2-806) Modification to achieve transferor's tax objectives.**

To achieve the transferor's tax objectives, the court may modify the terms of a governing instrument in a manner that is not contrary to the transferor's probable intention. The court may provide that the modification has retroactive effect.