**South Carolina General Assembly**

122nd Session, 2017-2018

**H. 3122**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

General Bill

Sponsors: Reps. Govan, Norman and Martin

Document Path: l:\council\bills\cc\15034vr17.docx

Companion/Similar bill(s): 93, 94

Introduced in the House on January 10, 2017

Currently residing in the House Committee on **Judiciary**

Summary: Alimony

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

12/15/2016 House Prefiled

12/15/2016 House Referred to Committee on **Judiciary**

1/10/2017 House Introduced and read first time ([House Journal‑page 81](file:///h:\hj\20170110.docx))

1/10/2017 House Referred to Committee on **Judiciary** ([House Journal‑page 81](file:///h:\hj\20170110.docx))

1/18/2017 House Member(s) request name added as sponsor: Norman

1/25/2017 House Member(s) request name added as sponsor: Martin

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[12/15/2016](file:///p:\pprever\2017-18\3122_20161215.docx)

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑130, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO ALIMONY AWARDS, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE AWARD OF ‘TRANSITIONAL ALIMONY’ PAYABLE BY ONE PARTY TO THE OTHER PARTY FOR A DETERMINABLE PERIOD OF TIME, TO CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF ‘CONTINUED COHABITATION’, TO REQUIRE A COURT TO CONSIDER ALTERNATE FORMS OF ALIMONY OTHER THAN PERIODIC ALIMONY WHEN A MARRIAGE HAS LASTED LESS THAN TEN YEARS AND TO MAKE FINDINGS IN CERTAIN CASES; TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑150, RELATING TO THE EFFECT OF REMARRIAGE OR CONTINUED COHABITATION ON THE ALLOCATION OF ALIMONY AND SUPPORT BETWEEN THE CHILDREN AND THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE, SO AS TO CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF ‘CONTINUED COHABITATION’; TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑170, RELATING TO MODIFICATION OF THE AMOUNT OF ALIMONY PAYMENTS, SO AS TO REQUIRE THE COURT TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION CERTAIN CONDUCT OF THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE AND, IN THE CASE OF A MODIFICATION BASED ON THE RETIREMENT OF A SUPPORTING SPOUSE, THE RECEIPT OF CERTAIN SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS BY THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE; AND TO AMEND SECTION 63‑3‑530, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE FAMILY COURT, SO AS TO INCLUDE DOMESTIC ACTIONS FOR THE ALLOWANCE OF ALIMONY FOR A DETERMINED PERIOD OF TIME; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 20‑3‑130(A), (B), and (H) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A) In proceedings for divorce from the bonds of matrimony, and in actions for separate maintenance and support, the court may grant alimony or separate maintenance and support in such amounts and for such term as the court considers appropriate as from the circumstances of the parties and the nature of case may be just, pendente lite, and permanently, or as otherwise allowed by statute. No alimony may be awarded a spouse who commits adultery before the earliest of these two events: (1) the formal signing of a written property or marital settlement agreement or (2) entry of a permanent order of separate maintenance and support or of a permanent order approving a property or marital settlement agreement between the parties.

(B) Alimony and separate maintenance and support awards may be granted pendente lite and permanently, or as otherwise allowed by statute in such amounts and for periods of time subject to conditions as the court considers just including, but not limited to:

(1) Transitional alimony, payable by one party to the other party for a determinable period of time. Transitional alimony is awarded when the court finds that rehabilitation is not required, but that the economically disadvantaged spouse needs financial assistance in adjusting to the economic consequences of the divorce. Transitional alimony is designed to aid a spouse who already possesses the capacity for self‑sufficiency but needs financial assistance in adjusting to the economic consequences of establishing and maintaining a household without the benefit of the other spouse’s income. As such, transitional alimony is a form of short‑term support. Transitional alimony may be modified only when:

(a) the parties agree that it may be modified;

(b) the court provides for modification in the divorce decree; or

(c) the supported spouse commits continued cohabitation as defined by law.

(2) Periodic alimony to be paid but terminating on the remarriage or continued cohabitation of the supported spouse or upon the death of either spouse (except as secured in subsection (D)) and terminable and modifiable based upon changed circumstances occurring in the future. The purpose of this form of support may include, but is not limited to, circumstances where the court finds it appropriate to order the payment of alimony on an ongoing basis where it is desirable to make a current determination and requirement for the ongoing support of a spouse to be reviewed and revised as circumstances may dictate in the future.

~~(2)~~(3) Lump‑sum alimony in a finite total sum to be paid in one installment, or periodically over a period of time, terminating only upon the death of the supported spouse, but not terminable or modifiable based upon remarriage or changed circumstances in the future. The purpose of this form of support may include, but not be limited to, circumstances where the court finds alimony appropriate but determines that such an award be of a finite and nonmodifiable nature.

~~(3)~~(4) Rehabilitative alimony in a finite sum to be paid in one installment or periodically, terminable upon the remarriage or continued cohabitation of the supported spouse, the death of either spouse (except as secured in subsection (D)) or the occurrence of a specific event to occur in the future, or modifiable based upon unforeseen events frustrating the good faith efforts of the supported spouse to become self‑supporting or the ability of the supporting spouse to pay the rehabilitative alimony. The purpose of this form of support may include, but is not limited to, circumstances where the court finds it appropriate to provide for the rehabilitation of the supported spouse, but to provide modifiable ending dates coinciding with events considered appropriate by the court such as the completion of job training or education and the like, and to require rehabilitative efforts by the supported spouse.

~~(4)~~(5) Reimbursement alimony to be paid in a finite sum, to be paid in one installment or periodically, terminable on the remarriage or continued cohabitation of the supported spouse, or upon the death of either spouse (except as secured in subsection (D)) but not terminable or modifiable based upon changed circumstances in the future. The purpose of this form of support may include, but is not limited to, circumstances where the court finds it necessary and desirable to reimburse the supported spouse from the future earnings of the payor spouse based upon circumstances or events that occurred during the marriage.

~~(5)~~(6) Separate maintenance and support to be paid periodically, but terminating upon the continued cohabitation of the supported spouse, upon the divorce of the parties, or upon the death of either spouse (except as secured in subsection (D)) and terminable and modifiable based upon changed circumstances in the future. The purpose of this form of support may include, but is not limited to, circumstances where a divorce is not sought, but it is necessary to provide for support of the supported spouse by way of separate maintenance and support when the parties are living separate and apart.

~~(6)~~(7) Such other form of spousal support, under terms and conditions as the court may consider just, as appropriate under the circumstances without limitation to grant more than one form of support.

For purposes of this subsection and unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties, ‘continued cohabitation’ means the supported spouse resides with another person in a romantic relationship ~~for a period of ninety or more consecutive days. The court may determine that a continued cohabitation exists if there is evidence that the supported spouse resides with another person in a romantic relationship for periods of less than ninety days and the two periodically separate in order to circumvent the ninety‑day requirement~~. If a marriage lasts less than ten years, the court must first consider alternate forms of alimony before awarding periodic alimony and make findings as to why alternate forms are not awarded when periodic alimony is awarded.

(H) The court, from time to time after considering the financial resources and marital fault of both parties, may order one party to pay a reasonable amount to the other for attorney fees, expert fees, investigation fees, costs, and suit money incurred in maintaining an action for divorce from the bonds of matrimony, as well as in actions for separate maintenance and support, including sums for services rendered and costs incurred before the commencement of the proceeding and after entry of judgment, pendente lite and permanently, or as otherwise allowed by statute.”

SECTION 2. Section 20‑3‑150 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 20‑3‑150. If the court awards the custody of the children to the spouse receiving alimony the court, by its decree, unless good cause to the contrary be shown, shall allocate any award for ~~permanent~~ alimony and support between the supported spouse and the children and upon the remarriage or continued cohabitation of the supported spouse the amount fixed in the decree for his or her support shall cease, and no further alimony payments may be required from the supporting spouse.

For purposes of this section and unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties, ‘continued cohabitation’ means the supported spouse resides with another person in a romantic relationship ~~for a period of ninety or more consecutive days. The court may determine that a continued cohabitation exists if there is evidence that the supported spouse resides with another person in a romantic relationship for periods of less than ninety days and the two periodically separate in order to circumvent the ninety‑day requirement~~.”

SECTION 3. Section 20‑3‑170 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 20‑3‑170. (A) Whenever any husband or wife, pursuant to a judgment of divorce from the bonds of matrimony, has been required to make his or her spouse any periodic payments of alimony and the circumstances of the parties or the financial ability of the spouse making the periodic payments shall have changed since the rendition of such judgment, either party may apply to the court which rendered the judgment for an order and judgment decreasing or increasing the amount of such alimony payments or terminating such payments and the court, after giving both parties an opportunity to be heard and to introduce evidence relevant to the issue, shall make such order and judgment as justice and equity shall require, with due regard to the changed circumstances, the supported spouse’s efforts to become self‑sufficient, or the supported spouse’s retention or diminution of assets received through equitable distribution through Article 5, Chapter 3, Title 20, and the financial ability of the supporting spouse, decreasing or increasing or confirming the amount of alimony provided for in such original judgment or terminating such payments. Thereafter the supporting spouse shall pay and be liable to pay the amount of alimony payments directed in such order and judgment and no other or further amount and such original judgment, for the purpose of all actions or proceedings of every nature and wherever instituted, whether within or without this State, shall be deemed to be and shall be modified accordingly, subject in every case to a further proceeding or proceedings under the provisions of this section in relation to such modified judgment.

(B) Retirement by the supporting spouse is sufficient grounds to warrant a hearing, if so moved by a party, to evaluate whether there has been a change of circumstances for alimony. The court shall consider the following factors:

(1) whether retirement was contemplated when alimony was awarded;

(2) the age of the supporting spouse;

(3) the health of the supporting spouse;

(4) whether the retirement is mandatory or voluntary;

(5) whether retirement would result in a decrease in the supporting spouse’s income; ~~and~~

(6) any other factors the court sees fit; and

(7) social security received by the supported spouse as a result of the supporting spouse’s social security benefit.

SECTION 4. Section 63‑3‑530(A)(38) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(38) to hear and determine an action where either party in his or her complaint, answer, counterclaim, or motion for pendente lite relief prays for the allowance of suit money pendente lite and permanently, or for a judicially determined period of time. In this action the court shall allow a reasonable sum for the claim if it appears well‑founded. Suit money, including attorney’s fees, may be assessed for or against a party to an action brought in or subject to the jurisdiction of the family court. An award of temporary attorney’s fees or suit costs must not be stayed by an appeal of the award;”

SECTION 5. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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