~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

POLLED OUT OF COMMITTEE

MAJORITY FAVORABLE

May 31, 2012

**H. 4738**

Introduced by Reps. Govan and Hearn

S. Printed 5/31/12--S.

Read the first time April 24, 2012.

**THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

To whom was referred a Bill (H. 4738) to amend Section 20‑3‑130, as amended, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, relating to the award of alimony in divorce and separate maintenance, etc., respectfully

**REPORT:**

Has polled the Bill out majority favorable.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑130, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE AWARD OF ALIMONY IN DIVORCE AND SEPARATE MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT ACTIONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT ALIMONY IS TERMINABLE ON “COHABITATION”, RATHER THAN ON “CONTINUED COHABITATION” OF THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE; TO DEFINE “COHABITATION” AS A COMMITTED, EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP FOR AN AGGREGATE OF NINETY DAYS; AND TO PROVIDE FACTORS THAT THE COURT MAY CONSIDER IN DETERMINING WHETHER COHABITATION EXISTS; TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑150, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO ALLOCATING ALIMONY TO THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE AND CHILD SUPPORT TO THE CHILDREN SUCH THAT ONLY ALIMONY IS TERMINATED UPON REMARRIAGE OR CONTINUED COHABITATION OF THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT ALIMONY IS TERMINABLE ON “COHABITATION”, RATHER THAN ON “CONTINUED COHABITATION” OF THE SUPPORTED SPOUSE; TO DEFINE “COHABITATION” AS A COMMITTED, EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP FOR AN AGGREGATE OF NINETY DAYS; AND TO PROVIDE FACTORS THAT THE COURT MAY CONSIDER IN DETERMINING WHETHER COHABITATION EXISTS; AND TO AMEND SECTION 20‑3‑170, RELATING TO THE MODIFICATION, CONFIRMATION, OR TERMINATION OF ALIMONY, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT UPON THE MOTION OF A PARTY TO A JUDGMENT OF DIVORCE, THE COURT SHALL CONDUCT A HEARING TO DETERMINE IF THE RETIREMENT OF THE SUPPORTING SPOUSE CONSTITUTES A CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ALIMONY PAYMENTS AND TO PROVIDE FACTORS FOR THE COURT TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THIS DETERMINATION.

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

SECTION 1. 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 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.”

SECTION 2. 20-3-130(C) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(C) In making an award of alimony or separate maintenance and support, the court must consider and give weight in such proportion as it finds appropriate to all of the following factors:

(1) the duration of the marriage together with the ages of the parties at the time of the marriage and at the time of the divorce or separate maintenance action between the parties;

(2) the physical and emotional condition of each spouse;

(3) the educational background of each spouse, together with need of each spouse for additional training or education in order to achieve that spouse's income potential;

(4) the employment history and earning potential of each spouse;

(5) the standard of living established during the marriage;

(6) the current and reasonably anticipated earnings of both spouses;

(7) the current and reasonably anticipated expenses and needs of both spouses;

(8) the marital and nonmarital properties of the parties, including those apportioned to him or her in the divorce or separate maintenance action;

(9) custody of the children, particularly where conditions or circumstances render it appropriate that the custodian not be required to seek employment outside the home, or where the employment must be of a limited nature;

(10) marital misconduct or fault of either or both parties, whether or not used as a basis for a divorce or separate maintenance decree if the misconduct affects or has affected the economic circumstances of the parties, or contributed to the breakup of the marriage, except that no evidence of personal conduct which may otherwise be relevant and material for the purpose of this subsection may be considered with regard to this subsection if the conduct took place subsequent to the happening of the earliest of (a) the formal signing of a written property or marital settlement agreement or (b) 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;

(11) the tax consequences to each party as a result of the particular form of support awarded;

(12) the existence and extent of any support obligation from a prior marriage or for any other reason of either party; ~~and~~

(13) the likelihood of retirement, whether that retirement would be voluntary or mandatory, and whether the retirement would result in a decrease in the supporting spouse’s income; and

(14) such other factors the court considers relevant.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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