

# SENATE, No. 2991

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 22, 2022

**Sponsored by:**  
**Senator TROY SINGLETON**  
**District 7 (Burlington)**

### **SYNOPSIS**

Permits court to effectuate equitable distribution when complaint for divorce or dissolution of civil union has been filed and either party has died prior to final judgment; provides that surviving party would not receive intestate or elective share.

### **CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



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2

1 AN ACT concerning equitable distribution and amending various  
2 sections of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. N.J.S.3B:5-3 is amended to read as follows:

8 3B:5-3. Intestate share of decedent's surviving spouse, partner in  
9 a civil union, or domestic partner.

10 The intestate share of the surviving spouse, partner in a civil  
11 union, or domestic partner is:

12 a. The entire intestate estate if:

13 (1) No descendant or parent of the decedent survives the  
14 decedent; or

15 (2) All of the decedent's surviving descendants are also  
16 descendants of the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or  
17 domestic partner and there is no other descendant of the surviving  
18 spouse or domestic partner, partner in a civil union, who survives  
19 the decedent;

20 b. The first 25% of the intestate estate, but not less than  
21 \$50,000.00 nor more than \$200,000.00, plus three-fourths of any  
22 balance of the intestate estate, if no descendant of the decedent  
23 survives the decedent, but a parent of the decedent survives the  
24 decedent;

25 c. The first 25% of the intestate estate, but not less than  
26 \$50,000.00 nor more than \$200,000.00, plus one-half of the balance  
27 of the intestate estate:

28 (1) If all of the decedent's surviving descendants are also  
29 descendants of the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or  
30 domestic partner and the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union,  
31 or domestic partner has one or more surviving descendants who are  
32 not descendants of the decedent; or

33 (2) If one or more of the decedent's surviving descendants is not  
34 a descendant of the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or  
35 domestic partner.

36 d. For purposes of this section:

37 “Surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or domestic partner”  
38 shall not include an individual who has filed a complaint not  
39 dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules of Court, or against  
40 whom a complaint not dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules of  
41 Court, has been filed for: divorce, dissolution of civil union,  
42 termination of domestic partnership, or divorce from bed and board.  
43 (cf: P.L.2005, c.331, s.2)

44

45 2. N.J.S.3B:5-4 is amended to read as follows:

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[ thus ]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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1       3B:5-4. Intestate shares of heirs other than surviving spouse,  
2 partner in a civil union, or domestic partner.

3       Any part of the intestate estate not passing to the decedent's  
4 surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or domestic partner under  
5 N.J.S.3B:5-3, or the entire intestate estate if there is no surviving  
6 spouse, partner in a civil union, or domestic partner, passes in the  
7 following order to the individuals designated below who survive the  
8 decedent:

9       a. To the decedent's descendants by representation;

10       b. If there are no surviving descendants, to the decedent's  
11 parents equally if both survive, or to the surviving parent, except as  
12 provided in section 4 of P.L.2009, c.43 (C.3B:5-14.1);

13       c. If there are no surviving descendants or parent, to the  
14 descendants of the decedent's parents or either of them by  
15 representation;

16       d. If there is no surviving descendant, parent or descendant of a  
17 parent, but the decedent is survived by one or more grandparents,  
18 half of the estate passes to the decedent's paternal grandparents  
19 equally if both survive, or to the surviving paternal grandparent, or  
20 to the descendants of the decedent's paternal grandparents or either  
21 of them if both are deceased, the descendants taking by  
22 representation; and the other half passes to the decedent's maternal  
23 relatives in the same manner; but if there is no surviving  
24 grandparent, or descendant of a grandparent on either the paternal  
25 or the maternal side, the entire estate passes to the decedent's  
26 relatives on the other side in the same manner as the half;

27       e. If there is no surviving descendant, parent, descendant of a  
28 parent, or grandparent, but the decedent is survived by one or more  
29 descendants of grandparents, the descendants take equally if they  
30 are all of the same degree of kinship to the decedent, but if of  
31 unequal degree those of more remote degree take by representation;

32       f. If there are no surviving descendants of grandparents, then  
33 the decedent's step-children or their descendants by representation.

34 (cf: P.L.2009, c.43, s.3)

35

36       3. Section 58 of P.L.2004, c.132 (C.3B:7-1.1) is amended to  
37 read as follows:

38       58. Effect of intentional killing on intestate succession, wills,  
39 trusts, joint assets, life insurance and beneficiary designations.

40       a. An individual who is responsible for the intentional killing  
41 of the decedent forfeits all benefits under this title with respect to  
42 the decedent's estate, including an intestate share, an elective share,  
43 an omitted spouse's, domestic partner's, civil union partner's, or  
44 child's share, exempt property and a family allowance. If the  
45 decedent died intestate, the decedent's intestate estate passes as if  
46 the killer disclaimed his share.

47       b. The intentional killing of the decedent:

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1 (1) revokes any revocable (a) disposition or appointment of  
2 property made by decedent to the killer in a governing instrument  
3 and any disposition or appointment created by law or in a governing  
4 instrument to a relative of the killer, (b) provision in a governing  
5 instrument conferring a general or special power of appointment on  
6 the killer or a relative of the killer, and (c) nomination in a  
7 governing instrument of the killer or a relative of the killer,  
8 nominating or appointing the killer or a relative of the killer to  
9 serve in any fiduciary or representative capacity; and

10 (2) severs the interests of the decedent and the killer in property  
11 held by them at the time of the killing as joint tenants with the right  
12 of survivorship or as tenants by the entireties, transforming the  
13 interests of the decedent and killer into tenancies in common.

14 c. For purposes of this chapter: (1) "governing instrument"  
15 means a governing instrument executed by the decedent; and (2)  
16 "relative of the killer" means an individual who is related to the  
17 killer by blood, adoption or affinity and who is not related to the  
18 decedent by blood or adoption or affinity.

19 (cf: P.L.2005, c.331, s.6)

20

21 4. N.J.S.3B:8-1 is amended to read as follows:

22 3B:8-1. Elective share of surviving spouse or domestic partner  
23 of person dying domiciled in this State; conditions.

24 If a married person, partner in a civil union, or person in a  
25 domestic partnership dies domiciled in this State, **[**on or after May  
26 28, 1980,**]** the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or  
27 domestic partner has a right of election to take an elective share of  
28 one-third of the augmented estate under the limitations and  
29 conditions hereinafter stated, **[**provided that at the time of death the  
30 decedent and the surviving spouse or domestic partner had not been  
31 living separate and apart in different habitations or had not ceased  
32 to cohabit as man and wife, either as the result of judgment of  
33 divorce from bed and board or under circumstances which would  
34 have given rise to a cause of action for divorce or nullity of  
35 marriage to a decedent prior to his death under the laws of this  
36 State**]** unless either the decedent or the surviving spouse, partner in  
37 a civil union, or domestic partner had filed a complaint not  
38 dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules of Court, for divorce,  
39 dissolution of civil union, termination of domestic partnership or  
40 divorce from bed and board.

41 (cf: P.L.2005, c.331, s.7)

42

43 5. N.J.S.3B:8-2 is amended to read as follows:

44 3B:8-2. Elective share of surviving spouse, partner in a civil  
45 union, or domestic partner of person dying not domiciled in this  
46 State.

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1 If a married person, partner in a civil union, or person in a  
2 domestic partnership not domiciled in this State dies, the right, if  
3 any, of the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or domestic  
4 partner to take an elective share in property in this State is governed  
5 by the law of the decedent's domicile at death.

6 (cf: P.L.2005, c.331, s.8)

7  
8 6. N.J.S.2A:34-23 is amended to read as follows:

9 2A:34-23. Alimony, maintenance. Pending any matrimonial  
10 action or action for dissolution of a civil union brought in this State  
11 or elsewhere, or after judgment of divorce or dissolution or  
12 maintenance, whether obtained in this State or elsewhere, the court  
13 may make such order as to the alimony or maintenance of the  
14 parties, and also as to the care, custody, education and maintenance  
15 of the children, or any of them, as the circumstances of the parties  
16 and the nature of the case shall render fit, reasonable and just, and  
17 require reasonable security for the due observance of such orders,  
18 including, but not limited to, the creation of trusts or other security  
19 devices, to assure payment of reasonably foreseeable medical and  
20 educational expenses. Upon neglect or refusal to give such  
21 reasonable security, as shall be required, or upon default in  
22 complying with any such order, the court may award and issue  
23 process for the immediate sequestration of the personal estate, and  
24 the rents and profits of the real estate of the party so charged, and  
25 appoint a receiver thereof, and cause such personal estate and the  
26 rents and profits of such real estate, or so much thereof as shall be  
27 necessary, to be applied toward such alimony and maintenance as to  
28 the said court shall from time to time seem reasonable and just; or  
29 the performance of the said orders may be enforced by other ways  
30 according to the practice of the court. Orders so made may be  
31 revised and altered by the court from time to time as circumstances  
32 may require.

33 The court may order one party to pay a retainer on behalf of the  
34 other for expert and legal services when the respective financial  
35 circumstances of the parties make the award reasonable and just. In  
36 considering an application, the court shall review the financial  
37 capacity of each party to conduct the litigation and the criteria for  
38 award of counsel fees that are then pertinent as set forth by court  
39 rule. Whenever any other application is made to a court which  
40 includes an application for pendente lite or final award of counsel  
41 fees, the court shall determine the appropriate award for counsel  
42 fees, if any, at the same time that a decision is rendered on the other  
43 issue then before the court and shall consider the factors set forth in  
44 the court rule on counsel fees, the financial circumstances of the  
45 parties, and the good or bad faith of either party. The court may not  
46 order a retainer or counsel fee of a party convicted of an attempt or  
47 conspiracy to murder the other party to be paid by the party who  
48 was the intended victim of the attempt or conspiracy.

1       a. In determining the amount to be paid by a parent for support  
2 of the child and the period during which the duty of support is  
3 owed, the court in those cases not governed by court rule shall  
4 consider, but not be limited to, the following factors:

- 5       (1) Needs of the child;
- 6       (2) Standard of living and economic circumstances of each  
7 parent;
- 8       (3) All sources of income and assets of each parent;
- 9       (4) Earning ability of each parent, including educational  
10 background, training, employment skills, work experience,  
11 custodial responsibility for children including the cost of providing  
12 child care and the length of time and cost of each parent to obtain  
13 training or experience for appropriate employment;
- 14       (5) Need and capacity of the child for education, including  
15 higher education;
- 16       (6) Age and health of the child and each parent;
- 17       (7) Income, assets and earning ability of the child;
- 18       (8) Responsibility of the parents for the court-ordered support of  
19 others;
- 20       (9) Reasonable debts and liabilities of each child and parent; and  
21       (10) Any other factors the court may deem relevant.

22       The obligation to pay support for a child who has not been  
23 emancipated by the court shall not terminate solely on the basis of  
24 the child's age if the child suffers from a severe mental or physical  
25 incapacity that causes the child to be financially dependent on a  
26 parent. The obligation to pay support for that child shall continue  
27 until the court finds that the child is relieved of the incapacity or is  
28 no longer financially dependent on the parent. However, in  
29 assessing the financial obligation of the parent, the court shall  
30 consider, in addition to the factors enumerated in this section, the  
31 child's eligibility for public benefits and services for people with  
32 disabilities and may make such orders, including an order involving  
33 the creation of a trust, as are necessary to promote the well-being of  
34 the child.

35       As used in this section "severe mental or physical incapacity"  
36 shall not include a child's abuse of, or addiction to, alcohol or  
37 controlled substances.

38       b. In all actions brought for divorce, dissolution of a civil  
39 union, divorce from bed and board, legal separation from a partner  
40 in a civil union couple or nullity the court may award one or more  
41 of the following types of alimony: open durational alimony;  
42 rehabilitative alimony; limited duration alimony or reimbursement  
43 alimony to either party. In so doing the court shall consider, but not  
44 be limited to, the following factors:

- 45       (1) The actual need and ability of the parties to pay;
- 46       (2) The duration of the marriage or civil union;
- 47       (3) The age, physical and emotional health of the parties;

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- 1 (4) The standard of living established in the marriage or civil  
2 union and the likelihood that each party can maintain a reasonably  
3 comparable standard of living, with neither party having a greater  
4 entitlement to that standard of living than the other;
- 5 (5) The earning capacities, educational levels, vocational skills,  
6 and employability of the parties;
- 7 (6) The length of absence from the job market of the party  
8 seeking maintenance;
- 9 (7) The parental responsibilities for the children;
- 10 (8) The time and expense necessary to acquire sufficient  
11 education or training to enable the party seeking maintenance to  
12 find appropriate employment, the availability of the training and  
13 employment, and the opportunity for future acquisitions of capital  
14 assets and income;
- 15 (9) The history of the financial or non-financial contributions to  
16 the marriage or civil union by each party including contributions to  
17 the care and education of the children and interruption of personal  
18 careers or educational opportunities;
- 19 (10) The equitable distribution of property ordered and any  
20 payouts on equitable distribution, directly or indirectly, out of  
21 current income, to the extent this consideration is reasonable, just  
22 and fair;
- 23 (11) The income available to either party through investment of  
24 any assets held by that party;
- 25 (12) The tax treatment and consequences to both parties of any  
26 alimony award, including the designation of all or a portion of the  
27 payment as a non-taxable payment;
- 28 (13) The nature, amount, and length of pendente lite support  
29 paid, if any; and
- 30 (14) Any other factors which the court may deem relevant.
- 31 In each case where the court is asked to make an award of  
32 alimony, the court shall consider and assess evidence with respect  
33 to all relevant statutory factors. If the court determines that certain  
34 factors are more or less relevant than others, the court shall make  
35 specific written findings of fact and conclusions of law on the  
36 reasons why the court reached that conclusion. No factor shall be  
37 elevated in importance over any other factor unless the court finds  
38 otherwise, in which case the court shall make specific written  
39 findings of fact and conclusions of law in that regard.
- 40 When a share of a retirement benefit is treated as an asset for  
41 purposes of equitable distribution, the court shall not consider  
42 income generated thereafter by that share for purposes of  
43 determining alimony.
- 44 c. In any case in which there is a request for an award of  
45 alimony, the court shall consider and make specific findings on the  
46 evidence about all of the statutory factors set forth in subsection b.  
47 of this section.

1 For any marriage or civil union less than 20 years in duration,  
2 the total duration of alimony shall not, except in exceptional  
3 circumstances, exceed the length of the marriage or civil union.  
4 Determination of the length and amount of alimony shall be made  
5 by the court pursuant to consideration of all of the statutory factors  
6 set forth in subsection b. of this section. In addition to those  
7 factors, the court shall also consider the practical impact of the  
8 parties' need for separate residences and the attendant increase in  
9 living expenses on the ability of both parties to maintain a standard  
10 of living reasonably comparable to the standard of living  
11 established in the marriage or civil union, to which both parties are  
12 entitled, with neither party having a greater entitlement thereto.

13 Exceptional circumstances which may require an adjustment to  
14 the duration of alimony include:

15 (1) The ages of the parties at the time of the marriage or civil  
16 union and at the time of the alimony award;

17 (2) The degree and duration of the dependency of one party on  
18 the other party during the marriage or civil union;

19 (3) Whether a spouse or partner has a chronic illness or unusual  
20 health circumstance;

21 (4) Whether a spouse or partner has given up a career or a career  
22 opportunity or otherwise supported the career of the other spouse or  
23 partner;

24 (5) Whether a spouse or partner has received a disproportionate  
25 share of equitable distribution;

26 (6) The impact of the marriage or civil union on either party's  
27 ability to become self-supporting, including but not limited to either  
28 party's responsibility as primary caretaker of a child;

29 (7) Tax considerations of either party;

30 (8) Any other factors or circumstances that the court deems  
31 equitable, relevant and material.

32 An award of alimony for a limited duration may be modified  
33 based either upon changed circumstances, or upon the  
34 nonoccurrence of circumstances that the court found would occur at  
35 the time of the award. The court may modify the amount of such an  
36 award, but shall not modify the length of the term except in unusual  
37 circumstances.

38 In determining the length of the term, the court shall consider the  
39 length of time it would reasonably take for the recipient to improve  
40 his or her earning capacity to a level where limited duration  
41 alimony is no longer appropriate.

42 d. Rehabilitative alimony shall be awarded based upon a plan  
43 in which the payee shows the scope of rehabilitation, the steps to be  
44 taken, and the time frame, including a period of employment during  
45 which rehabilitation will occur. An award of rehabilitative alimony  
46 may be modified based either upon changed circumstances, or upon  
47 the nonoccurrence of circumstances that the court found would  
48 occur at the time of the rehabilitative award.



1 This section is not intended to preclude a court from modifying  
2 alimony awards based upon the law.

3 e. Reimbursement alimony may be awarded under  
4 circumstances in which one party supported the other through an  
5 advanced education, anticipating participation in the fruits of the  
6 earning capacity generated by that education. An award of  
7 reimbursement alimony shall not be modified for any reason.

8 f. Except as provided in subsection i., nothing in this section  
9 shall be construed to limit the court's authority to award open  
10 durational alimony, limited duration alimony, rehabilitative alimony  
11 or reimbursement alimony, separately or in any combination, as  
12 warranted by the circumstances of the parties and the nature of the  
13 case.

14 g. In all actions for divorce or dissolution other than those  
15 where judgment is granted solely on the ground of separation the  
16 court may consider also the proofs made in establishing such  
17 ground in determining an amount of alimony or maintenance that is  
18 fit, reasonable and just. In all actions for divorce, dissolution of  
19 civil union, divorce from bed and board, or legal separation from a  
20 partner in a civil union couple where judgment is granted on the  
21 ground of institutionalization for mental illness the court may  
22 consider the possible burden upon the taxpayers of the State as well  
23 as the ability of the party to pay in determining an amount of  
24 maintenance to be awarded.

25 h. (1) Except as provided in this subsection, in all actions  
26 where a judgment of divorce, dissolution of civil union, or divorce  
27 from bed and board **【**or legal separation from a partner in a civil  
28 union couple**】** is entered the court may make such award or awards  
29 to the parties, in addition to alimony and maintenance, to effectuate  
30 an equitable distribution of the property, both real and personal,  
31 which was legally and beneficially acquired by them or either of  
32 them during the marriage or civil union. However, all such  
33 property, real, personal or otherwise, legally or beneficially  
34 acquired during the marriage or civil union by either party by way  
35 of gift, devise, or intestate succession shall not be subject to  
36 equitable distribution, except that interspousal gifts or gifts between  
37 partners in a civil union couple shall be subject to equitable  
38 distribution.

39 (2) If a complaint not dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules  
40 of Court has been filed for an action under paragraph (1) of this  
41 section, and either party to the litigation dies prior to the entry of  
42 the final judgment, the court's authority to effectuate an equitable  
43 distribution of the property shall not abate.

44 (3) The court may not make an award concerning the equitable  
45 distribution of property on behalf of a party **【**convicted of**】** barred  
46 from inheriting under subsection a. of section 58 of P.L.2004, c.132  
47 (C.3B:7-1.1), a party responsible for an attempt or conspiracy to  
48 murder the other party.

1 i. No person convicted of Murder, N.J.S.2C:11-3;  
2 Manslaughter, N.J.S.2C:11-4; Criminal Homicide, N.J.S.2C:11-2;  
3 Aggravated Assault, under subsection b. of N.J.S.2C:12-1; or a  
4 substantially similar offense under the laws of another jurisdiction,  
5 may receive alimony if: (1) the crime results in death or serious  
6 bodily injury, as defined in subsection b. of N.J.S.2C:11-1, to a  
7 family member of a divorcing party; and (2) the crime was  
8 committed after the marriage or civil union. A person convicted of  
9 an attempt or conspiracy to commit murder may not receive  
10 alimony from the person who was the intended victim of the  
11 attempt or conspiracy. Nothing in this subsection shall be  
12 construed to limit the authority of the court to deny alimony for  
13 other bad acts.

14 As used in this subsection:

15 "Family member" means a spouse, partner in a civil union, child,  
16 parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, first cousin,  
17 grandparent, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law,  
18 daughter-in-law, stepparent, stepchild, stepbrother, stepsister, half  
19 brother, or half sister, whether the individual is related by blood,  
20 marriage or civil union, or adoption.

21 j. Alimony may be modified or terminated upon the  
22 prospective or actual retirement of the obligor.

23 (1) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that alimony shall  
24 terminate upon the obligor spouse or partner attaining full  
25 retirement age, except that any arrearages that have accrued prior to  
26 the termination date shall not be vacated or annulled. The court may  
27 set a different alimony termination date for good cause shown based  
28 on specific written findings of fact and conclusions of law.

29 The rebuttable presumption may be overcome if, upon  
30 consideration of the following factors and for good cause shown,  
31 the court determines that alimony should continue:

32 (a) The ages of the parties at the time of the application for  
33 retirement;

34 (b) The ages of the parties at the time of the marriage or civil  
35 union and their ages at the time of entry of the alimony award;

36 (c) The degree and duration of the economic dependency of the  
37 recipient upon the payor during the marriage or civil union;

38 (d) Whether the recipient has foregone or relinquished or  
39 otherwise sacrificed claims, rights or property in exchange for a  
40 more substantial or longer alimony award;

41 (e) The duration or amount of alimony already paid;

42 (f) The health of the parties at the time of the retirement  
43 application;

44 (g) Assets of the parties at the time of the retirement  
45 application;

46 (h) Whether the recipient has reached full retirement age as  
47 defined in this section;

48 (i) Sources of income, both earned and unearned, of the parties;

1 (j) The ability of the recipient to have saved adequately for  
2 retirement; and

3 (k) Any other factors that the court may deem relevant.

4 If the court determines, for good cause shown based on specific  
5 written findings of fact and conclusions of law, that the  
6 presumption has been overcome, then the court shall apply the  
7 alimony factors as set forth in subsection b. of this section to the  
8 parties' current circumstances in order to determine whether  
9 modification or termination of alimony is appropriate. If the obligor  
10 intends to retire but has not yet retired, the court shall establish the  
11 conditions under which the modification or termination of alimony  
12 will be effective.

13 (2) Where the obligor seeks to retire prior to attaining the full  
14 retirement age as defined in this section, the obligor shall have the  
15 burden of demonstrating by a preponderance of the evidence that  
16 the prospective or actual retirement is reasonable and made in good  
17 faith. Both the obligor's application to the court for modification or  
18 termination of alimony and the obligee's response to the application  
19 shall be accompanied by current Case Information Statements or  
20 other relevant documents as required by the Rules of Court, as well  
21 as the Case Information Statements or other documents from the  
22 date of entry of the original alimony award and from the date of any  
23 subsequent modification.

24 In order to determine whether the obligor has met the burden of  
25 demonstrating that the obligor's prospective or actual retirement is  
26 reasonable and made in good faith, the court shall consider the  
27 following factors:

28 (a) The age and health of the parties at the time of the  
29 application;

30 (b) The obligor's field of employment and the generally  
31 accepted age of retirement for those in that field;

32 (c) The age when the obligor becomes eligible for retirement at  
33 the obligor's place of employment, including mandatory retirement  
34 dates or the dates upon which continued employment would no  
35 longer increase retirement benefits;

36 (d) The obligor's motives in retiring, including any pressures to  
37 retire applied by the obligor's employer or incentive plans offered  
38 by the obligor's employer;

39 (e) The reasonable expectations of the parties regarding  
40 retirement during the marriage or civil union and at the time of the  
41 divorce or dissolution;

42 (f) The ability of the obligor to maintain support payments  
43 following retirement, including whether the obligor will continue to  
44 be employed part-time or work reduced hours;

45 (g) The obligee's level of financial independence and the  
46 financial impact of the obligor's retirement upon the obligee; and

47 (h) Any other relevant factors affecting the obligor's decision to  
48 retire and the parties' respective financial positions.

1 If the obligor intends to retire but has not yet retired, the court  
2 shall establish the conditions under which the modification or  
3 termination of alimony will be effective.

4 (3) When a retirement application is filed in cases in which  
5 there is an existing final alimony order or enforceable written  
6 agreement established prior to the effective date of this act, the  
7 obligor's reaching full retirement age as defined in this section shall  
8 be deemed a good faith retirement age. Upon application by the  
9 obligor to modify or terminate alimony, both the obligor's  
10 application to the court for modification or termination of alimony  
11 and the obligee's response to the application shall be accompanied  
12 by current Case Information Statements or other relevant documents  
13 as required by the Rules of Court, as well as the Case Information  
14 Statements or other documents from the date of entry of the original  
15 alimony award and from the date of any subsequent modification.  
16 In making its determination, the court shall consider the ability of  
17 the obligee to have saved adequately for retirement as well as the  
18 following factors in order to determine whether the obligor, by a  
19 preponderance of the evidence, has demonstrated that modification  
20 or termination of alimony is appropriate:

21 (a) The age and health of the parties at the time of the  
22 application;

23 (b) The obligor's field of employment and the generally  
24 accepted age of retirement for those in that field;

25 (c) The age when the obligor becomes eligible for retirement at  
26 the obligor's place of employment, including mandatory retirement  
27 dates or the dates upon which continued employment would no  
28 longer increase retirement benefits;

29 (d) The obligor's motives in retiring, including any pressures to  
30 retire applied by the obligor's employer or incentive plans offered  
31 by the obligor's employer;

32 (e) The reasonable expectations of the parties regarding  
33 retirement during the marriage or civil union and at the time of the  
34 divorce or dissolution;

35 (f) The ability of the obligor to maintain support payments  
36 following retirement, including whether the obligor will continue to  
37 be employed part-time or work reduced hours;

38 (g) The obligee's level of financial independence and the  
39 financial impact of the obligor's retirement upon the obligee; and

40 (h) Any other relevant factors affecting the parties' respective  
41 financial positions.

42 (4) The assets distributed between the parties at the time of the  
43 entry of a final order of divorce or dissolution of a civil union shall  
44 not be considered by the court for purposes of determining the  
45 obligor's ability to pay alimony following retirement.

46 k. When a non-self-employed party seeks modification of  
47 alimony, the court shall consider the following factors:

48 (1) The reasons for any loss of income;

- 1 (2) Under circumstances where there has been a loss of  
2 employment, the obligor's documented efforts to obtain replacement  
3 employment or to pursue an alternative occupation;
- 4 (3) Under circumstances where there has been a loss of  
5 employment, whether the obligor is making a good faith effort to  
6 find remunerative employment at any level and in any field;
- 7 (4) The income of the obligee; the obligee's circumstances; and  
8 the obligee's reasonable efforts to obtain employment in view of  
9 those circumstances and existing opportunities;
- 10 (5) The impact of the parties' health on their ability to obtain  
11 employment;
- 12 (6) Any severance compensation or award made in connection  
13 with any loss of employment;
- 14 (7) Any changes in the respective financial circumstances of the  
15 parties that have occurred since the date of the order from which  
16 modification is sought;
- 17 (8) The reasons for any change in either party's financial  
18 circumstances since the date of the order from which modification  
19 is sought, including, but not limited to, assessment of the extent to  
20 which either party's financial circumstances at the time of the  
21 application are attributable to enhanced earnings or financial  
22 benefits received from any source since the date of the order;
- 23 (9) Whether a temporary remedy should be fashioned to provide  
24 adjustment of the support award from which modification is sought,  
25 and the terms of any such adjustment, pending continuing  
26 employment investigations by the unemployed spouse or partner;  
27 and
- 28 (10) Any other factor the court deems relevant to fairly and  
29 equitably decide the application.
- 30 Under circumstances where the changed circumstances arise  
31 from the loss of employment, the length of time a party has been  
32 involuntarily unemployed or has had an involuntary reduction in  
33 income shall not be the only factor considered by the court when an  
34 application is filed by a non-self-employed party to reduce alimony  
35 because of involuntary loss of employment. The court shall  
36 determine the application based upon all of the enumerated factors,  
37 however, no application shall be filed until a party has been  
38 unemployed, or has not been able to return to or attain employment  
39 at prior income levels, or both, for a period of 90 days. The court  
40 shall have discretion to make any relief granted retroactive to the  
41 date of the loss of employment or reduction of income.
- 42 1. When a self-employed party seeks modification of alimony  
43 because of an involuntary reduction in income since the date of the  
44 order from which modification is sought, then that party's  
45 application for relief must include an analysis that sets forth the  
46 economic and non-economic benefits the party receives from the  
47 business, and which compares these economic and non-economic

1 benefits to those that were in existence at the time of the entry of  
2 the order.

3 m. When assessing a temporary remedy, the court may  
4 temporarily suspend support, or reduce support on terms; direct that  
5 support be paid in some amount from assets pending further  
6 proceedings; direct a periodic review; or enter any other order the  
7 court finds appropriate to assure fairness and equity to both parties.

8 n. Alimony may be suspended or terminated if the payee  
9 cohabits with another person. Cohabitation involves a mutually  
10 supportive, intimate personal relationship in which a couple has  
11 undertaken duties and privileges that are commonly associated with  
12 marriage or civil union but does not necessarily maintain a single  
13 common household.

14 When assessing whether cohabitation is occurring, the court shall  
15 consider the following:

16 (1) Intertwined finances such as joint bank accounts and other  
17 joint holdings or liabilities;

18 (2) Sharing or joint responsibility for living expenses;

19 (3) Recognition of the relationship in the couple's social and  
20 family circle;

21 (4) Living together, the frequency of contact, the duration of the  
22 relationship, and other indicia of a mutually supportive intimate  
23 personal relationship;

24 (5) Sharing household chores;

25 (6) Whether the recipient of alimony has received an  
26 enforceable promise of support from another person within the  
27 meaning of subsection h. of R.S.25:1-5; and

28 (7) All other relevant evidence.

29 In evaluating whether cohabitation is occurring and whether  
30 alimony should be suspended or terminated, the court shall also  
31 consider the length of the relationship. A court may not find an  
32 absence of cohabitation solely on grounds that the couple does not  
33 live together on a full-time basis.

34 As used in this section:

35 "Full retirement age" shall mean the age at which a person is  
36 eligible to receive full retirement for full retirement benefits under  
37 section 216 of the federal Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. s.416).

38 (cf: P.L.2014, c.42, s.1)

39

40 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

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42

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#### STATEMENT

44

45 This bill provides that if a complaint has been filed for divorce,  
46 dissolution of a civil union, or divorce from bed and board, and  
47 either party to the litigation dies prior to the entry of the final  
48 judgment, the court has authority to effectuate an equitable

1 distribution of the property. In addition, the bill expands the laws  
2 of intestate succession and elective share to include partners in a  
3 civil union and also provides that a surviving spouse, partner in a  
4 civil union, or domestic partner who has filed a complaint or against  
5 a complaint has been filed for divorce, dissolution of civil union,  
6 termination of domestic partnership, or divorce from bed and board,  
7 would not receive an intestate share of the decedent's estate and has  
8 no right of election to take an elective share of the estate. This bill  
9 is intended to eliminate what has been known as the "black hole"  
10 that exists when a surviving spouse is excluded from receiving  
11 his/her share of equitable distribution when a spouse dies prior to a  
12 final judgment of divorce being issued and the surviving spouse is  
13 therefore left without a remedy.

14 This bill amends N.J.S.3B:5-3 to provide that a partner in a civil  
15 union, in addition to the surviving spouse or domestic partner, may  
16 take an intestate share of the decedent's estate. The bill also amends  
17 this section to provide that a surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or  
18 domestic partner would not include an individual who has filed a  
19 complaint not dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules of Court or  
20 against whom a complaint not dismissed pursuant to R. 4:6-2 of the Rules  
21 of Court has been filed for divorce, dissolution of civil union, termination  
22 of domestic partnership, or divorce from bed and board.

23 N.J.S.3B:5-4 provides the order of heirs that would take any part of an  
24 intestate estate not passing to the decedent's surviving spouse or domestic  
25 partner, or the entire intestate estate if there is no surviving spouse or  
26 domestic partner. This section is amended to include a partner in a civil  
27 union, in addition to the surviving spouse or domestic partner.

28 Section 58 of P.L.2004, c.132 (C.3B:7-1.1) is amended to include a  
29 civil union partner among of the list of persons who would forfeit all  
30 benefits under Title 3B with respect to the decedent's estate if the  
31 decedent was intentionally killed by that individual.

32 N.J.S.3B:8-1 is amended to provide if a partner in a civil union, in  
33 addition to a married person or a person in a domestic partnership, dies in  
34 this State, the surviving spouse, partner in a civil union, or domestic  
35 partner has a right of election to take an elective share of one-third of the  
36 augmented estate, unless either the decedent or the surviving spouse,  
37 partner in a civil union, or domestic partner had filed a complaint not  
38 dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 of the Rules of Court for divorce,  
39 dissolution of civil union, termination of domestic partnership, or divorce  
40 from bed and board.

41 N.J.S.3B:8-2 is amended to provide if a partner in a civil union, in  
42 addition to a married person or a person in a domestic partnership, not  
43 domiciled in this State dies, the right, if any, of the surviving spouse,  
44 partner in a civil union, or domestic partner to take an elective share in  
45 property in this State is governed by the law of the decedent's domicile at  
46 death.

47 This bill also amends N.J.S.2A:34-23 to provide that if a complaint not  
48 dismissed pursuant to R.4:6-2 has been filed for divorce, dissolution of a  
49 civil union, or divorce from bed and board, and either party to the  
50 litigation dies prior to the entry of the final judgment, the court's  
51 authority to effectuate an equitable distribution of the property would not

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16

1 abate. This statute is also amended to provide that the court may not  
2 make an award concerning the equitable distribution of property on behalf  
3 of a party barred from inheriting on grounds that the party was  
4 responsible the intentional killing of the other party. The definition of a  
5 “family member” is also revised to include a “partner in a civil union.”