

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 54
Judiciary

(Delegate Vallario)

Estates - Appointment of Personal Representatives

This bill gives courts discretionary power to appoint personal representatives outside of the priority order prescribed by law, for good cause.

The bill is to be construed prospectively and may not be applied to a death of a decedent that occurs before the bill's October 1, 2003 effective date.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The changes are procedural in nature and would not directly affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill provides that, in appointing a personal representative, a court may pass over a person or persons with equal or higher priority to appoint an individual with equal or lower priority. The bill requires a court to have "good cause" when exercising the provision.

Current Law: State law sets forth a priority order of classes of individuals to be named personal representative of an estate by a register of wills or probate court. There are 11 classes total. The first five classes in order of priority are: (1) personal representatives

named in a will admitted to probate; (2) the surviving spouse and children of an intestate decedent, or surviving spouse of a testate decedent; (3) residuary legatees (other persons named in a will); (4) children of a testate decedent who are entitled to share in the estate; and (5) grandchildren of a decedent who are entitled to share in the estate. A register of wills or court must observe the statutory order of priority. When there are several eligible persons in a class entitled to appointment, the court or register may appoint one or more of them as necessary or convenient for the proper administration of the estate. However, subject to certain statutory exceptions, all personal representatives named in the will are entitled to probate. Within classes two through nine, courts may appoint two or more persons in different classes provided that the person or class first entitled to appointment consents.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: An identical bill, HB 1279 was unfavorably reported by the House Judiciary Committee during the 1998 session.

Cross File: SB 311 (Senator Giannetti) – Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Register of Wills, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 4, 2003
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