

Article 24.

120-Hour Survivorship Requirement; Revised Simultaneous Death Act.

§ 28A-24-1. Definitions.

In this Article:

- (1) "Co-owners with right of survivorship" includes joint tenants in a joint tenancy with right of survivorship, tenants by the entireties, and other co-owners of property or accounts held under circumstances that entitle one or more to the whole of the property or account on the death of the other or others.
- (2) "Governing instrument" means a deed, will, trust, insurance or annuity policy, account with a POD designation, pension, profit sharing, retirement, or similar benefit plan, instrument creating or exercising a power of appointment or a power of attorney, or a dispositive, appointive, or nominative instrument of any similar type.
- (3) "Payor" means a trustee, insurer, business entity, employer, government, governmental agency or subdivision, or any other person authorized or obligated by law or a governing instrument to make payments. (1947, c. 1016, s. 1; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-2. Requirement of survival by 120 hours.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this Article, where the title to property, the devolution of property, the right to elect an interest in property, or any other right or benefit depends upon an individual's survivorship of the death of another individual, an individual who is not established by clear and convincing evidence to have survived the other individual by at least 120 hours is deemed to have predeceased the other individual.

(b) If the language of the governing instrument disposes of property in such a way that two or more beneficiaries are designated to take alternatively by reason of surviving each other and it is not established by clear and convincing evidence that any such beneficiary has survived any other such beneficiary by at least 120 hours, the property shall be divided into as many equal shares as there are alternative beneficiaries, and these shares shall be distributed respectively to each such beneficiary's estate.

(c) If the language of the governing instrument disposes of property in such a way that it is to be distributed to the member or members of a class who survived an individual, each member of the class will be deemed to have survived that individual by at least 120 hours unless it is established by clear and convincing evidence that the individual survived the class member or members by at least 120 hours. (1947, c. 1016, s. 2; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-3. Co-owners with right of survivorship; requirement of survival by 120 hours.

Except as otherwise provided in this Article:

- (1) If there are two or more co-owners with right of survivorship and it is not established by clear and convincing evidence that at least one of them survived the other or others by at least 120 hours, then, unless the governing instrument provides otherwise, each co-owner's pro rata interest in the property passes as if that co-owner had survived all other co-owners by at least 120 hours.
- (2) If there are two or more co-owners with right of survivorship and it is established by clear and convincing evidence that at least one of them survived the other or others by at least 120 hours, then, unless the governing instrument

provides otherwise, the pro rata interest or interests of the deceased owner or owners who are not established by clear and convincing evidence to have survived by at least 120 hours passes to (i) the remaining owner if only one or (ii) if more than one, then to those remaining owners according to the pro rata interest of each. (1947, c. 1016, s. 3; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1; 2012-69, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-4. Survival of an event; 120-hour period not applicable.

For purposes of a governing instrument that requires survival of an event, other than the death of another individual, the 120-hour survivorship requirement of this Article does not apply. (1947, c. 1016, s. 4; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-5. Victim deemed to survive slayer.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Article, solely for the purpose of determining whether the victim is entitled to any right or benefit that depends on surviving the death of a slayer under G.S. 31A-3, the slayer is deemed to have predeceased the victim and the victim is deemed to have survived the slayer by at least 120 hours (or any greater survival period required of the victim under the slayer's will or other governing instrument) unless it is established by clear and convincing evidence that the slayer survived the victim by at least 120 hours. (1947, c. 1016, s. 6; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-6. Exceptions to the 120-hour survival requirement.

Survival by 120 hours is not required if any of the following apply:

- (1) The governing instrument contains language dealing explicitly with simultaneous deaths or deaths in a common disaster and the language is operable under the facts of the case.
- (2) The governing instrument expressly indicates that an individual is not required to survive the death of another individual by any specified period or expressly requires the individual to survive another individual for a specified period; but survival must be established by clear and convincing evidence.
- (3) The imposition of a 120-hour requirement of survival would cause a nonvested property interest or a power of appointment to fail to qualify for validity under G.S. 41-15; but survival must be established by clear and convincing evidence.
- (4) The application of a 120-hour requirement of survival to multiple governing instruments would result in an unintended failure or duplication of a disposition; but survival must be established by clear and convincing evidence.
- (5) The application of a 120-hour requirement of survival would deprive an individual or the estate of an individual of an otherwise available tax exemption, deduction or credit, expressly including the marital deduction, resulting in the imposition of a tax upon a donor or testator or other person (or their estate) as the transferor of any property. "Tax" includes any federal or State gift, estate or inheritance tax.
- (6) The application of a 120-hour requirement of survival would result in an escheat. (1947, c. 1016, s. 7; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-7. Evidence of death or status.

For purposes of this Article, the following rules of evidence apply relating to the determination of death and status of a beneficiary subject to a requirement of survivorship and of the person the beneficiary must survive:

- (1) Death occurs when an individual is determined to be dead pursuant to G.S. 90-323 or Chapter 28C of the General Statutes.
- (2) A certified or authenticated copy of a death certificate purporting to be issued by an official or agency in the place where the death purportedly occurred is prima facie evidence of the fact, place, date, and time of death and the identity of the decedent. In the absence of evidence disputing the death certificate, that certificate shall be conclusive evidence of the fact, place, date, and time of death and the identity of the decedent.
- (3) A certified or authenticated copy of any record or report of a governmental agency, domestic or foreign, that an individual is missing, detained, dead, or alive is prima facie evidence of the status and of the dates, circumstances, and places disclosed by the record or report. The record or report is conclusive evidence of the status and of the dates, circumstances, and places disclosed by the record or report unless there is evidence to the contrary.
- (4) In the absence of prima facie evidence of death under subdivision (2) or (3) of this section, the fact of death may be established by clear and convincing evidence, including circumstantial evidence. (1947, c. 1016, s. 8; 1973, c. 1329, s. 3; 2007-132, s. 1.)

§ 28A-24-8. Protection of payors, bona fide purchasers, and other third parties; personal liability of recipient.

(a) A payor or other third party is not liable for having made a payment or transferred an item of property or any other benefit to a person designated in a governing instrument who, under this Article, is not entitled to the payment or item of property, or for having taken any other action in good faith reliance on the person's apparent entitlement under the terms of the governing instrument, before the payor or other third party received written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this Article. A payor or other third party is liable for a payment made or other action taken after the payor or other third party received written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this Article.

Written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this Article must be mailed to the payor's or other third party's main office or home by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or served upon the payor or other third party in the same manner as a summons in a civil action. Upon receipt of written notice of a claimed lack of entitlement under this Article, a payor or other third party may pay any amount owed or transfer or deposit any item of property other than tangible personal property held by it to or with the clerk of the superior court having jurisdiction of the probate proceedings relating to the decedent's estate, or if no proceedings have been commenced, to or with the clerk of the superior court having jurisdiction of probate proceedings relating to decedents' estates located in the county of the decedent's residence. The clerk shall hold the funds or item of property and, upon the clerk's determination under this Article, shall order disbursement in accordance with the determination. Payments, transfers, or deposits made to or with the clerk discharge the payor or other third party from all claims for the value of amounts paid to or items of property transferred to or deposited with the clerk.

(b) A person who purchases property for value and without notice, or who received a payment or other item of property in partial or full satisfaction of a legally enforceable obligation, is neither obligated under this Article to return the payment, item of property, or benefit, nor liable under this Article 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 Article 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 Article. (2007-132, s. 1.)