

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4382**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the Year Two Thousand Twelve**  
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An Act to reform sheriff civil process operations.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 32 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010  
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting, in line 259, at the end of the definition  
3 “Employee”, the following text:-

4           ““Employee”, as applied to persons whose regular compensation is paid from an account  
5 established by the sheriff’s civil process office pursuant to section 9 of this act for the sheriff’s  
6 civil process office and shall mean any person who is appointed by the sheriff as a deputy sheriff  
7 or employee of the sheriff’s civil process office who is engaged in duties which require that his  
8 time be devoted to the service of the sheriff’s civil process office in each year during the  
9 ordinary working hours of regular and permanent employees, and who is regularly and  
10 permanently employed in such service and receives a salary, hourly wage or regular  
11 compensation for assigned civil process duties as determined by each Sheriff.”

12           SECTION 2. Section 3 of said chapter 32 , as so appearing , is hereby amended by  
13 inserting, in line 300, after the words “county correction facilities,” the following: -

14 “and any deputy engaged in civil process enforcement activities that involve the acts of  
15 arrest, eviction or seizure of property and who is defined by Section 4 of this Act as a full-time  
16 employee of the Sheriff.”

17 SECTION 3. Section 3 of said chapter 32, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
18 inserting after subparagraph (a) the following paragraph: --

19 (b) any deputy sheriff or employee of the sheriff’s civil process office, including any  
20 deputy sheriff or employee of the process office that has been transferred to the Commonwealth,  
21 who is now a member or becomes a member of a system applicable to any governmental unit  
22 shall be given credit in such system for any service rendered by depositing in the annuity savings  
23 fund of such system such sums and under such conditions as are set forth under said section.

24 SECTION 4. Section 2 of chapter 32B, as so appearing, is amended by inserting, at the  
25 end of subsection (d), in line 67, the following text: -

26 “Deputy sheriffs and other persons appointed by the sheriff, who are salaried or hourly  
27 employees, who devote 20 or more hours per week to assigned duties, and who serve in the  
28 sheriff’s civil process office, shall be eligible for benefits under this chapter in the same manner,  
29 and to the same extent, any other state employee”.

30 SECTION 5. Chapter 37 is hereby amended by inserting after section 3 the following  
31 sections: —

32 Section 3A. Sheriff’s Civil Process Office.

33 (A) Each sheriff shall establish a civil process office within the sheriff’s department and  
34 shall assign deputies appointed pursuant to section 3 who, along with the sheriff, shall serve and

35 execute within their counties, including within the political boundaries of the previously  
36 abolished county governments, and where the Commonwealth is a party or interested, all  
37 precepts lawfully issued to them, and all other process required by law to be served by an officer  
38 pursuant to section 11 of chapter 37. A deputy assigned to serve process may do so in cases in  
39 which a county, city, town, parish, religious society, fire or other district is a party or interested,  
40 although he is an inhabitant or member thereof. The sheriff may also appoint employees to work  
41 in the sheriff's civil process office. All deputies and employees of the process office shall serve  
42 at the will and the pleasure of the sheriff. Any deputy who ceases to be assigned to or to  
43 perform civil process duties, either as an employee or as a contracted deputized process server,  
44 shall be decommissioned as a deputy as provided by law and shall immediately return all  
45 equipment and property issued to him by the sheriffs' department.

46 (B) Deputies and other employees of the process office, who are salaried or hourly  
47 employees and who devote 20 or more hours per week to assigned duties, shall be state  
48 employees for the purposes of Chapters 32, 32A, 32B, 152, 258, two 268A, and 268B, and shall  
49 be compensated in accordance with this subsection and subsection (C) of this section.

50 (C) Subject to the following limitations, the sheriff shall have power and authority as  
51 employer in all matters related to civil process deputies and employees including, but not limited  
52 to, hiring, firing, promotion, discipline, work-related injuries and internal organization of the  
53 department:-

- 54 1. No sheriff, deputy or employee shall serve process for anyone except the Sheriff.
- 55 2. The sheriff or an assigned deputy, or contracted deputized process server may serve  
56 process outside regular business hours.

57           3. Sheriffs and non-commission full-time deputies and employees may receive only a  
58 salary or hourly wage, and shall at no time receive a commission, or any portion of any fee, for  
59 service of process no matter when the service is performed.

60           4. Except for contracted deputized process servers, part-time sheriffs, deputy sheriffs  
61 and employees shall not be paid a commission or any portion of any fee, for service of process  
62 performed during hours for which the sheriff, deputy or employee is being compensated by  
63 federal, state, county or municipal funds;

64           5. The annual salary, cumulative hourly wage, commissions, or the cumulative portion of  
65 any fees for service of process, of any individual deputy, employee, or contracted deputized  
66 process server shall not exceed the annual salary of the sheriff; and

67           (D) In addition to any other training and certification required by law, any deputy sheriff  
68 who perform civil process duties, including but not limited to enforcement duties, shall be sworn  
69 and shall complete a civil process officers certification program, pursuant to a policy and  
70 curriculum that shall be adopted and approved by the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association , the  
71 Massachusetts Deputy Sheriffs Association, and the Municipal Police Training Council . The  
72 civil process officers certification program shall include training and orientation on all  
73 requirements of lawful service of process and shall be conducted jointly by the Massachusetts  
74 Sheriffs Association, the Massachusetts Deputy Sheriffs Association, and the Municipal Training  
75 Council. Deputy sheriffs shall begin the civil process officers certification program within 30  
76 days after receiving appointment or being assigned civil process duties, and shall be re-certified  
77 annually after completing the program.. .

78 (E) All full time deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office,  
79 including those deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who have been  
80 transferred to the commonwealth, and who completed a one year probationary period of full time  
81 employment, will be granted under this subsection, without impairment, full benefits for vacation  
82 and sick time earned from their original commencement of employment in the sheriff's civil  
83 process office, but not to exceed those of regular state employees.

84 Section 3B. Property Rights of Sheriffs, Deputy Sheriff and Employees.

85 No sheriff, deputy or employee, nor any other individual or entity shall have or acquire  
86 any legal right whatsoever to the tangible or intangible property of the civil process office, nor  
87 any revenue derived from fees collected from the service of process of any proceeds from the  
88 sale of the property within the process office, other than compensation as determined under this  
89 chapter.

90 Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, all fees derived from service of process  
91 shall be used solely for the operation of the sheriff's civil process office. All tangible and  
92 intangible property shall belong to the state and shall be under the sole possession and control of  
93 the sheriff.

94 SECTION 6. Chapter 37 is further amended by striking out section 11 and inserting in  
95 place thereof the following section:-

96 Section 11. Recording of Process.

97 (A) The Massachusetts Sheriffs Association, shall establish a system by which all  
98 process fees are reported and recorded and shall develop and adopt policies and procedures, to be

99 approved by the Auditor, the Comptroller and the Office of Administration and Finance which  
100 shall be referenced in an internal control plan kept by each sheriff's office. Information about  
101 each request for process to be served that is received by the sheriff's civil process office shall be  
102 reported and recorded in the system within 30 days of when the information becomes available,  
103 and shall include but not be limited to the following information for each piece of process to be  
104 served: --

105 (a) the title of the action, including court name and docket number;

106 (b) the date the process was issued or required to be served;

107 (c) the type of process;

108 (d) the name and address of the person requesting that process be served;

109 (e) the name and address of the person or location upon which service is to be made;

110 (f) the fee charged;

111 (g) the date of billing to collect the fee;

112 (h) the date of fee collected;

113 (i) the date service was made;

114 (j) the manner of service;

115 (k) the amount of commission paid, if any ; and

116 (l) the name of the person performing service, and if different, the name of the person or  
117 entity to whom the commission was paid.

118 (B) A summary of the information contained in subsection (A) of this section shall be  
119 compiled and reported in writing to the State Auditor by the sheriff annually no later than  
120 September 30th.

121 (C) Administrative costs associated with the recording of information prescribed under  
122 subsection (A) of this section, and prepared under subsection (B) of this section, including  
123 expenditures for personnel or the purchase of equipment required to perform the recording of  
124 information, may be paid from the civil process account or any other account established for the  
125 operation of the sheriff's office.

126 (D) In addition to the requirements of subsection (A) of this section, annual reports filed  
127 pursuant to subsection (B) of this section shall include, but not be limited to, completed, itemized  
128 schedules of the following information pertaining to the service of process:

129 (a) assets, including cash, deposits, accounts receivable, and the value of the property and  
130 equipment;

131 (b) liabilities, including accounts payable, client escrow deposits, capital lease  
132 obligations, and all other debts;

133 (c) income derived from the service of process and otherwise;

134 (d) expenses paid, including payroll, commissions, and all other expenses; and

135 (e) any surplus from the sheriff's civil process account that has been transferred to an  
136 account as authorized by law.

137 SECTION 7. Section 14 of chapter 37, as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition , is  
138 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1 and 2, the words “They may execute precepts in their  
139 hands at the time of their removal from office; and,”.

140 SECTION 8. Chapter 37 is further amended by inserting after section 14 the following  
141 new section: -

142 Section 14 A. Return of Writs and Precepts after removal.

143 Upon the removal of a deputy sheriff by the sheriff, the removed deputy shall  
144 immediately return to the sheriff’s civil process office all process and other documents received  
145 or in his possession, along with any fees collected. If a deputy or former deputy fails to comply  
146 with the terms of this section, the sheriff shall institute legal proceedings to enforce the terms of  
147 this section or any other section herein.

148 SECTION 9. Chapter 37 is further amended by inserting after section 22 the following  
149 section: — Section 23. Fees from Process Office.

150 (A) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22 of this chapter or the provisions of  
151 chapter 35, with the approval and oversight of the office of administration and finance and  
152 house and senate ways and means, each sheriff shall establish a civil process retained revenue  
153 account or some other appropriate account that complies standard government accounting  
154 practices and with applicable laws, rules and regulations. The civil process account shall be  
155 separate from any other account and shall be used for the operation of the process office..

156 (B) Payroll and all other bills of the civil process office, except administrative costs  
157 pursuant to subsection (C) of section 6 of this act shall be paid from the process account.

158 However, after all civil process revenue has been expended for payroll and other bills of the civil  
159 process office, a sheriff may use funding from a fiscal year budgetary appropriation to pay  
160 payroll and all other civil process expenses.

161 (C) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), contributions from paychecks  
162 issued to deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who are members in  
163 service of the state retirement system, shall be deducted and forwarded to the state treasurer. The  
164 amounts deducted shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 32 and any  
165 other rules and regulations promulgated there under.

166 (D) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), premiums from paychecks of  
167 deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who are insured under Chapter  
168 32A or 32B shall be deducted and forwarded to the state treasurer. The amounts deducted shall  
169 be determined in accordance with the provisions of those chapters and any other rules and  
170 regulations promulgated there under.

171 (E) Annually, on or before the 75th day after the close of the fiscal year, any excess  
172 revenue held in the civil process account shall be carried over for process operations or  
173 transferred from the process account to an account that has been approved by the office of  
174 administration and finance, the office of the comptroller, and the auditor and has been  
175 established to fund statutory functions of the sheriff. Annually, on or before the 75th day after  
176 the close of the fiscal year, the sheriff shall render a sworn statement of account to the state  
177 treasurer, to the office of administration and finance and the house and senate committees on  
178 ways and means.

179 (F) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), no funds held in any civil process  
180 account shall be used either for payment of liability expenses incurred by the sheriff's civil  
181 process office pursuant to chapter 258, or for payments to employees pursuant to chapter 152.  
182 Any judgment, settlement or attorneys fees incurred as a result of litigation concerning the  
183 process office shall be paid in accordance with chapter 258, in the same manner as any other  
184 claim, judgment, settlement, or attorneys fees paid by the sheriff's office.

185 (G) If the sheriff projects that revenues collected from civil process fees will not be  
186 sufficient to cover costs, then 30 days in advance of the projected deficiency, the sheriff shall  
187 notify the house and senate committees on ways and means and the office of administration and  
188 finance in writing of the projected deficiency and the reasons for it.

189 SECTION 10. Chapter 126 is hereby amended by inserting after section 18A the  
190 following section: —

191 Section 18B. Injuries to Deputy Sheriffs and Employees of Sheriff's CivilProcess Office.

192 Whenever a a deputy sheriff or other employee of a sheriff's civil process office who, due  
193 to no fault of his own, while in the performance of duty, receives bodily injury from an act of  
194 violence by a person connected with the proceeding for which service of process was attempted  
195 or served, and who is incapacitated for duty because of the injury sustained, shall be paid, in  
196 addition to benefits paid under chapter 152, the difference between the weekly cash benefits to  
197 which he is entitled under chapter 152 and his regular salary. Any absence from work due to the  
198 injury shall not be charged against the employee's available sick leave credits, even if the  
199 absence is for less than 8 calendar days. This section does not apply to injuries sustained during  
200 work for which a deputy or employee is being paid commission.

201 All amounts payable under this section shall be paid at the same times and in the same  
202 manner as, and for all purposes shall be deemed to be the deputy or employee's regular  
203 compensation.

204 If a person or entity is liable for monetary damages for an injury of a deputy sheriff or  
205 other employee of a sheriff's civil process for which he is compensated under this section, the  
206 deputy, employee, or sheriff's department that is paying compensation under this section, may  
207 proceed to enforce the liability of such person or entity in any court of competent jurisdiction.  
208 Any sum recovered shall be for the benefit of the sheriff's department that is paying such  
209 compensation, unless the sum is greater than the compensation paid to the injured person, in  
210 which case the excess shall be retained by or paid to the injured person. For the purposes of this  
211 section, "excess" shall mean the amount by which the total sum received as damages for the  
212 injury, exclusive of interest and costs, exceeds the amount paid under this section as  
213 compensation to the injured person. The party bringing the action shall be entitled to any costs  
214 recovered by him. Any interest received in the action shall be apportioned between the sheriff's  
215 department and the injured person in proportion to the amounts received by them respectively,  
216 inclusive of interest and costs. The expense of any attorney's fees shall be divided between the  
217 sheriff's department and the injured person in proportion to the amounts received by them  
218 respectively.

219 Any person or entity, who injures a deputy sheriff or other employee of a sheriff's civil  
220 process office who is compensated under this section for the injury, shall be liable in tort to the  
221 sheriff's department that is paying the injured person, for all costs, in excess of the amount of  
222 compensation paid, that are incurred by the sheriff's department to replace the injured person.

223 SECTION 11. Said chapter 262, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out  
224 section 8A and inserting in place thereof the following section;-

225 Section 8A. Each constable shall annually, on or before the 15th day of April, file with  
226 the county treasurer an account signed by him under the penalties of perjury of all fees and  
227 money received by him under the provisions of section 8 for the service of civil process. If 2 or  
228 more constables share such fees and money between themselves, they may file a joint account  
229 provided that each signs the account under the penalties of perjury.

230 Each deputy sheriff shall annually, on or before 30 days after the close of the fiscal year,  
231 file with the sheriff and with the state treasurer an account signed by him under the penalties of  
232 perjury of all fees and money received by him under the provisions of section 8 for the service of  
233 civil process. If 2 or more deputy sheriffs share such fees and money between them they may  
234 file a joint account, provided that each shall sign the account under the penalties of perjury.

235 On a schedule determined by the sheriff, but at least quarterly, each deputy sheriff who  
236 serves process shall file a written report to the sheriff of all the process they have served. The  
237 written report shall be in a form approved by the sheriff and shall contain all the information  
238 contained in section 7 of this act. The written report shall be made under the pains and penalties  
239 of perjury.

240 SECTION 12. The provisions of this act shall take effect July 1, 2012.