

Assembly Bill No. 2304

CHAPTER 586

An act to amend Section 1277 of the Code of Civil Procedure, relating to name changes.

[Approved by Governor September 29, 2008. Filed with Secretary of State September 29, 2008.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2304, Plescia. Name changes.

Existing law establishes the procedure for a person to change his or her name, as specified. When a proceeding for a change of name is commenced by the filing of a petition, existing law requires the court to make an order reciting the filing of the petition, the name of the person by whom it is filed, and the name proposed, except as specified. Existing law also authorizes an address confidentiality program to which victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking may apply by completing an application in person at a community-based victims' assistance program to be approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of enabling state and local agencies to respond to requests for public records without disclosing a program participant's residence address contained in any public record and otherwise provide for confidentiality of identity for that person, subject to specified conditions. Existing law provides that if a petition for a change of name alleges a specified reason or circumstance and the petitioner is a participant in the address confidentiality program, that action for a change of name is exempt from the requirement for publication.

This bill would, in addition, require the court to keep confidential the current legal name of the petitioner and prohibit that name from being published in the court's calendars, indexes, or register of actions by any means or in any public forum, including a hardcopy or an electronic copy, or any other type of public media or display when the petition for a change of name of a participant in the address confidentiality program alleges a specified reason or circumstance. The bill would also authorize a petitioner to request that the records be sealed and would require the Judicial Council to develop, on or before January 1, 2010, rules of court and forms for that purpose.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1277 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

1277. (a) If a proceeding for a change of name is commenced by the filing of a petition, except as provided in subdivisions (b), (c), and (e), the court shall thereupon make an order reciting the filing of the petition, the name of the person by whom it is filed, and the name proposed. The order shall direct all persons interested in the matter to appear before the court at a time and place specified, which shall be not less than six nor more than 12 weeks from the time of making the order, unless the court orders a different time, to show cause why the application for change of name should not be granted. The order shall direct all persons interested in the matter to make known any objection that they may have to the granting of the petition for change of name by filing a written objection, which includes the reasons for the objection, with the court at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and by appearing in court at the hearing to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted. The order shall state that, if no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

A copy of the order to show cause shall be published pursuant to Section 6064 of the Government Code in a newspaper of general circulation to be designated in the order published in the county. If no newspaper of general circulation is published in the county, a copy of the order to show cause shall be posted by the clerk of the court in three of the most public places in the county in which the court is located, for a like period. Proof shall be made to the satisfaction of the court of this publication or posting, at the time of the hearing of the application.

Four weekly publications shall be sufficient publication of the order to show cause. If the order is published in a daily newspaper, publication once a week for four successive weeks shall be sufficient.

If a petition has been filed for a minor by a parent and the other parent, if living, does not join in consenting thereto, the petitioner shall cause, not less than 30 days prior to the hearing, to be served notice of the time and place of the hearing or a copy of the order to show cause on the other parent pursuant to Section 413.10, 414.10, 415.10, or 415.40. If notice of the hearing cannot reasonably be accomplished pursuant to Section 415.10 or 415.40, the court may order that notice be given in a manner that the court determines is reasonably calculated to give actual notice to the nonconsenting parent. In that case, if the court determines that notice by publication is reasonably calculated to give actual notice to the nonconsenting parent, the court may determine that publication of the order to show cause pursuant to this subdivision is sufficient notice to the nonconsenting parent.

(b) (1) If the petition for a change of name alleges a reason or circumstance described in paragraph (2), and the petitioner is a participant in the address confidentiality program created pursuant to Chapter 3.1 (commencing with Section 6205) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, the action for a change of name is exempt from the requirement for publication of the order to show cause under subdivision (a), and the petition and the order of the court shall, in lieu of reciting the proposed name, indicate

that the proposed name is confidential and will be on file with the Secretary of State pursuant to the provisions of the address confidentiality program.

(2) The procedure described in paragraph (1) applies to petitions alleging any of the following reasons or circumstances:

(A) To avoid domestic violence, as defined in Section 6211 of the Family Code.

(B) To avoid stalking, as defined in Section 646.9 of the Penal Code.

(C) The petitioner is, or is filing on behalf of, a victim of sexual assault, as defined in Section 1036.2 of the Evidence Code.

(3) For any petition under this subdivision, the current legal name of the petitioner shall be kept confidential by the court and shall not be published or posted in the court's calendars, indexes, or register of actions, as required by Article 7 (commencing with Section 69840) of Chapter 5 of Title 8 of the Government Code, or by any means or in any public forum, including a hardcopy or an electronic copy, or any other type of public media or display.

(4) (A) A petitioner may request that the court file the petition and any other papers associated with the proceeding under seal. The court may consider the request at the same time as the petition for name change, and may grant the request in any case in which the court finds that all of the following factors apply:

(i) There exists an overriding interest that overcomes the right of public access to the record.

(ii) The overriding interest supports sealing the record.

(iii) A substantial probability exists that the overriding interest will be prejudiced if the record is not sealed.

(iv) The proposed order to seal the records is narrowly tailored.

(v) No less restrictive means exist to achieve the overriding interest.

(B) On or before January 1, 2010, the Judicial Council shall develop rules of court and forms consistent with the requirements of this paragraph.

(c) A proceeding for a change of name for a witness participating in the state Witness Protection Program established by Title 7.5 (commencing with Section 14020) of Part 4 of the Penal Code who has been approved for the change of name by the program is exempt from the requirement for publication of the order to show cause under subdivision (a).

(d) If application for change of name is brought as part of an action under the Uniform Parentage Act (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7600) of Division 12 of the Family Code), whether as part of a petition or cross-complaint or as a separate order to show cause in a pending action thereunder, service of the application shall be made upon all other parties to the action in a like manner as prescribed for the service of a summons, as is set forth in Article 3 (commencing with Section 415.10) of Chapter 4 of Title 5 of Part 2. Upon the setting of a hearing on the issue, notice of the hearing shall be given to all parties in the action in a like manner and within the time limits prescribed generally for the type of hearing (whether trial or order to show cause) at which the issue of the change of name is to be decided.

(e) If a guardian files a petition to change the name of his or her minor ward pursuant to Section 1276:

(1) The guardian shall provide notice of the hearing to any living parent of the minor by personal service at least 30 days prior to the hearing.

(2) If either or both parents are deceased or cannot be located, the guardian shall cause, not less than 30 days prior to the hearing, to be served a notice of the time and place of the hearing or a copy of the order to show cause on the child's grandparents, if living, pursuant to Section 413.10, 414.10, 415.10, or 415.40.