

**STORAGE NAME:** h1005a.ca  
**DATE:** April 14, 1999

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON  
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 1005  
**RELATING TO:** Enforcement of Money Judgments  
**SPONSOR(S):** Rep. Greenstein  
**COMPANION BILL(S):** SB 2150(s)

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) JUDICIARY YEAS 7 NAYS 0
  - (2) COMMUNITY AFFAIRS YEAS 8 NAYS 0
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5)
- 

I. SUMMARY:

The bill authorizes code enforcement boards to sue for a money judgment in the amount of a code enforcement infraction or repair for the amount of the lien plus accrued interest.

It also provides that in these actions for money judgment, the prevailing party is entitled to costs and attorney's fees incurred in the action.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

Code enforcement boards are currently permitted to impose fines and enter a lien against the land on which the violation exists and upon any other real or personal property owned by the violator. The boards do not have the authority to create an independent cause of action to collect a fine pursuant to Chapter 162, F.S. See *City of Tampa v. Braxton*, 616 So.2d 554 (Fla. 2 DCA 1993).

Many properties found to be in code violation and assessed fines are homestead properties; and the board may not foreclose its enforcement lien against homestead property. *Miskin v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 661 So.2d 415 (Fla. 4 DCA 1995). The boards maintain that in some of these situations, there is little ability to enforce compliance with the code.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

The bill authorizes code enforcement boards to institute actions for money judgments three months after filing a lien if the lien remains unpaid. The bill permits code enforcement boards to collect attorney's fees and costs in their actions for money judgments.

C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

- (1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

The bill will create more disputes.

- (2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

Code enforcement boards will be able to maintain separate actions for money judgments; owners of homestead property will be subject to a lawsuit over the collection of their fines owed to code enforcement boards.

- (3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

No

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

- (1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

- (2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

- (3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

- a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

Possibly. An increase in the number of legal actions filed by code enforcement boards will increase the costs of maintaining the local judicial system, which are currently payable by counties; this increase must be met by a decrease in another area of spending or an increase in taxes.

- b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

Yes. The bill authorizes the award of costs and reasonable attorney's fees to prevailing parties.

- c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

No

- d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

No

- e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

No

3. Personal Responsibility:

- a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

N/A

- b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

N/A

4. Individual Freedom:

- a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

No

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

Yes. In addition to filing a lien, local government will now be enabled to sue for a money judgment.

5. Family Empowerment:

- a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

- (1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

N/A

(2) Who makes the decisions?

N/A

(3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

(4) Are families required to participate in a program?

N/A

(5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

N/A

b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

N/A

c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

Sections 162.09 and 162.10, F.S.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

**Section 1:** Amends subsection 162.09(3), Florida Statutes, authorizing code enforcement boards to sue to recover the amount of a money judgment on a lien plus interest.

**Section 2:** Amends section 162.10, Florida Statutes, authorizing the prevailing party to recover all costs, including attorney's fees, in an action for a money judgment on a lien.

**Section 3:** Provides for an effective date of July 1, 1999.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

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1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

N/A

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

N/A

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

N/A

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

N/A

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

N/A

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require municipalities or counties to spend money or to take action that requires a significant expenditure of money.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill is not anticipated to reduce the authority of municipalities or counties to raise total aggregate revenues.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the total aggregate municipality/county percentage share of a state tax.

V. COMMENTS:

**House Judiciary Committee:** While the change to Section 621.09(3), F.S. to permit actions for money judgment will not necessarily result in any additional assets of the violators being available to satisfy the lien, the boards maintain that service of process will have the practical effect of having some of the violators enter court appearances, thus providing another opportunity for the boards to request compliance from the violators. The change to Section 162.10, F.S., will increase the expenses of violators by awarding attorney's fees and costs to the code boards for suing the violators.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

On April 14, 1999, the House Committee on Community Affairs adopted the following amendments:

**Amendment 01:** Authorizes counties or municipalities with populations over 50,000 to adopt ordinances granting code enforcement boards or special masters authority to impose fines for code violations in excess of those currently authorized. Specifies limitations for the imposition of the fines. Allows for the creation of additional criteria to be utilized when determining the amount of the higher fines.

**Amendment 02:** Provides an effective date of "upon becoming a law."

**Amendment 03:** Authorizes notice by posting also at the "main county governmental center."

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY:

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