

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to bail bonds; amending s. 903.045,  
3 F.S.; revising legislative intent concerning the  
4 obligations of a bail bond agent; revising the  
5 commitments and obligations of a bail bond agent;  
6 revising the circumstances that constitute a breach by  
7 the bail bond agent; amending s. 903.26, F.S.;  
8 revising the circumstances under which a surety bond  
9 deposited as bail must be forfeited; revising the  
10 circumstances that require a forfeiture to be  
11 discharged; amending s. 903.31, F.S.; specifying that  
12 certain provisions concerning cancellation of a bond  
13 do not apply if the bond is forfeited within a  
14 specified period after it has been posted; providing  
15 that an original appearance bond does not guarantee  
16 placement in a court-ordered program; providing an  
17 effective date.

18  
19 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

20  
21 Section 1. Section 903.045, Florida Statutes, is amended  
22 to read:

23 903.045 Nature of criminal surety bail bonds.—It is the  
24 public policy of this state and the intent of the Legislature  
25 that a criminal surety bail bond, executed by a bail bond agent

26 licensed pursuant to chapter 648 in connection with the pretrial  
27 or appellate release of a criminal defendant, shall be construed  
28 as a commitment by and an obligation upon the bail bond agent to  
29 ensure that the defendant appears at all ~~subsequent~~ criminal  
30 proceedings for which the surety bond is posted and otherwise  
31 ~~fulfills all conditions of the bond. The failure of a defendant~~  
32 ~~to appear at any subsequent criminal proceeding or the breach by~~  
33 ~~the defendant of any other condition of the bond constitutes a~~  
34 ~~breach by the bail bond agent of this commitment and obligation.~~

35 Section 2. Subsections (2), (5), (7), and (8) of section  
36 903.26, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

37 903.26 Forfeiture of the bond; when and how directed;  
38 discharge; how and when made; effect of payment.—

39 (2) (a) If there is a failure of the defendant to appear as  
40 required ~~breach of the bond~~, the court shall declare the bond  
41 and any bonds or money deposited as bail forfeited. The clerk of  
42 the court shall mail or electronically transmit a notice to the  
43 surety agent and surety company within 5 days after the  
44 forfeiture. A certificate signed by the clerk of the court or  
45 the clerk's designee, certifying that the notice required herein  
46 was mailed or electronically transmitted on a specified date and  
47 accompanied by a copy of the required notice, shall constitute  
48 sufficient proof that such mailing or electronic transmission  
49 was properly accomplished as indicated therein. If such mailing  
50 or electronic transmission was properly accomplished as

51 | evidenced by such certificate, the failure of the surety agent,  
52 | of a company, or of a defendant to receive such notice shall not  
53 | constitute a defense to such forfeiture and shall not be grounds  
54 | for discharge, remission, reduction, set aside, or continuance  
55 | of such forfeiture. The forfeiture shall be paid within 60 days  
56 | after ~~of~~ the date the notice was mailed or electronically  
57 | transmitted.

58 |       (b) Failure of the defendant to appear at the time, date,  
59 | and place of required appearance shall result in forfeiture of  
60 | the bond. Such forfeiture shall be automatically entered by the  
61 | clerk upon such failure to appear, and the clerk shall follow  
62 | the procedures ~~outlined~~ in paragraph (a). However, the court may  
63 | determine, in its discretion, in the interest of justice, that  
64 | an appearance by the defendant on the same day as required does  
65 | not warrant forfeiture of the bond; and the court may direct the  
66 | clerk to set aside any such forfeiture which may have been  
67 | entered. Any appearance by the defendant later than the required  
68 | day constitutes forfeiture of the bond, and the court shall not  
69 | preclude entry of such forfeiture by the clerk.

70 |       (c) If there is a forfeiture ~~breach~~ of the bond, the clerk  
71 | shall provide, upon request, a certified copy of the warrant or  
72 | capias to the bail bond agent or surety company.

73 |       (5) The court shall discharge a forfeiture within 60 days  
74 | upon:

75 |       (a) A determination that it was impossible for the

76 | defendant to appear as required or within 60 days after the date  
77 | of the required appearance due to circumstances beyond the  
78 | defendant's control. The potential adverse economic consequences  
79 | of appearing as required may shall not be considered as  
80 | constituting a ground for such a determination;

81 | (b) A determination that, at the time of the required  
82 | appearance or within 60 days after the date of the required  
83 | appearance, the defendant was ~~adjudicated insane and~~ confined in  
84 | an institution or hospital; ~~or~~ was confined in any county,  
85 | state, federal, or immigration detention facility; was deported;  
86 | or is deceased a jail or prison;

87 | (c) Surrender or arrest of the defendant at the time of  
88 | the required appearance or within 60 days after the date of the  
89 | required appearance in any county, state, or federal jail or  
90 | prison and upon a hold being placed to return the defendant to  
91 | the jurisdiction of the court ~~if the delay has not thwarted the~~  
92 | ~~proper prosecution of the defendant. If the forfeiture has been~~  
93 | ~~before discharge, the court shall direct remission of the~~  
94 | ~~forfeiture.~~ The court shall condition a discharge or remission  
95 | on the payment of costs and the expenses incurred by an official  
96 | in returning the defendant to the jurisdiction of the court; or

97 | (d) A determination that the state is unwilling to seek  
98 | extradition of the fugitive defendant within 30 days after a  
99 | request by the surety agent to do so, and contingent upon the  
100 | surety agent's consent to pay all costs and the expenses

101 incurred by an official in returning the defendant to the  
 102 jurisdiction of the court, up to the penal amount of the bond.

103 (7) The payment by a surety of a forfeiture under ~~the~~  
 104 ~~provisions of~~ this law shall have the same effect on the bond as  
 105 payment of a judgment.

106 (8) If the defendant is arrested and returned to the  
 107 county of jurisdiction of the court or has posted a new bond for  
 108 the case at issue before ~~prior to~~ judgment, the clerk, upon  
 109 affirmation by the sheriff or the chief correctional officer,  
 110 shall, without further hearing or order of the court, discharge  
 111 the forfeiture of the bond. However, if the surety agent fails  
 112 to pay the costs and expenses incurred in returning the  
 113 defendant to the county of jurisdiction, the clerk shall not  
 114 discharge the forfeiture of the bond. If the surety agent and  
 115 the sheriff fail to agree on the amount of said costs, then the  
 116 court, after notice to the sheriff and the state attorney, shall  
 117 determine the amount of the costs.

118 Section 3. Section 903.31, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
 119 read:

120 903.31 Canceling the bond.—

121 (1) Within 10 business days after the conditions of a bond  
 122 have been satisfied or the forfeiture discharged or remitted,  
 123 the court shall order the bond canceled and, if the surety has  
 124 attached a certificate of cancellation to the original bond, the  
 125 clerk of the court shall mail or electronically furnish an

126 | executed certificate of cancellation to the surety without cost.  
127 | An adjudication of guilt or innocence ~~or~~ an acquittal, if a  
128 | period of 36 months has passed since the original bond was  
129 | posted, or a withholding of an adjudication of guilt shall  
130 | satisfy the conditions of the bond. The original appearance bond  
131 | shall expire 36 months after such bond has been posted for the  
132 | release of the defendant from custody. This subsection does not  
133 | apply to cases in which a bond has been declared forfeited  
134 | before the 36-month expiration.

135 |         (2) The original appearance bond does not guarantee a  
136 | deferred sentence; sentences, appearance during or after a  
137 | presentence investigation; appearance during or after appeals;  
138 | conduct during or appearance after admission to a pretrial  
139 | intervention program; placement in a court-ordered program,  
140 | including a residential mental health facility; payment of  
141 | fines; or attendance at educational or rehabilitation  
142 | facilities the court otherwise provides in the judgment. If the  
143 | original appearance bond has been forfeited or revoked, the bond  
144 | shall not be reinstated without approval from the surety on the  
145 | original bond.

146 |         (3) ~~If In any case where~~ no formal charges are ~~have been~~  
147 | brought against the defendant within 365 days after arrest, the  
148 | court shall order the bond canceled unless good cause is shown  
149 | by the state.

150 |         Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.