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1  
2 An act relating to unlawful detention by a transient  
3 occupant; amending s. 82.045, F.S.; revising factors  
4 that establish a person as a transient occupant of  
5 residential property; specifying circumstances when a  
6 transient occupancy terminates; providing that a  
7 transient occupancy is not extended by the presence of  
8 personal belongings of a former transient occupant;  
9 requiring the party entitled to possession of a  
10 dwelling to allow a former transient occupant to  
11 recover personal belongings at reasonable times and  
12 under reasonable conditions; specifying a reasonable  
13 time to recover personal belongings; authorizing a  
14 party entitled to possession of the dwelling, under  
15 certain circumstances, to impose additional conditions  
16 on access to the dwelling or personal belongings;  
17 providing a presumption of when a former transient  
18 occupant has abandoned his or her personal belongings;  
19 providing circumstances in which the period for  
20 recovering personal belongings may be extended or  
21 shortened; authorizing a former transient occupant,  
22 under certain circumstances, to bring a civil action  
23 for damages or recovery of personal belongings;  
24 requiring a court to award the prevailing party  
25 reasonable attorney fees and costs; providing  
26 construction; providing an effective date.

27  
28 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
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30 Section 1. Section 82.045, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
31 read:

32 82.045 Remedy for unlawful detention by a transient  
33 occupant of residential property; recovery of transient  
34 occupant's personal belongings.—

35 (1) As used in this section, the term "transient occupant"  
36 means a person whose residency in a dwelling intended for  
37 residential use has occurred for a brief length of time, is not  
38 pursuant to a lease, and whose occupancy was intended as  
39 transient in nature.

40 (a) Factors that establish that a person is a transient  
41 occupant include, but are not limited to:

42 1. The person does not have an ownership interest,  
43 financial interest, or leasehold interest in the property  
44 entitling him or her to occupancy of the property.

45 2. The person does not have any property utility  
46 subscriptions.

47 3. The person cannot produce documentation, correspondence,  
48 or identification cards sent or issued by a government agency,  
49 including, but not limited to, the Department of Highway Safety  
50 and Motor Vehicles or the supervisor of elections, which show  
51 that the person used the property address as an address of  
52 record with the agency within the previous 12 months ~~does not~~  
53 ~~use the property address as an address of record with any~~  
54 ~~governmental agency, including, but not limited to, the~~  
55 ~~Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or the~~  
56 ~~supervisor of elections.~~

57 4. ~~The person does not receive mail at the property.~~

58 4.5. The person pays minimal or no rent for his or her stay

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59 at the property.

60 ~~5.6.~~ The person does not have a designated space of his or  
61 her own, such as a room, at the property.

62 ~~6.7.~~ The person has minimal, if any, personal belongings at  
63 the property.

64 ~~7.8.~~ The person has an apparent permanent residence  
65 elsewhere.

66 (b) Minor contributions made for the purchase of household  
67 goods, or minor contributions towards other household expenses,  
68 do not establish residency.

69 (2) A transient occupant unlawfully detains a residential  
70 property if the transient occupant remains in occupancy of the  
71 residential property after the party entitled to possession of  
72 the property has directed the transient occupant to leave. A  
73 transient occupancy terminates when a transient occupant begins  
74 to reside elsewhere, surrenders the key to the dwelling, or  
75 leaves the dwelling when directed by a law enforcement officer  
76 in receipt of an affidavit under subsection (3), the party  
77 entitled to possession, or a court. A transient occupancy is not  
78 extended by the presence of personal belongings of a former  
79 transient occupant.

80 (3) Any law enforcement officer may, upon receipt of a  
81 sworn affidavit of the party entitled to possession that a  
82 person who is a transient occupant is unlawfully detaining  
83 residential property, direct a transient occupant to surrender  
84 possession of residential property. The sworn affidavit must set  
85 forth the facts, including the applicable factors listed in  
86 paragraph (1) (a), which establish that a transient occupant is  
87 unlawfully detaining residential property.

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88 (a) A person who fails to comply with the direction of the  
89 law enforcement officer to surrender possession or occupancy  
90 violates s. 810.08. In any prosecution of a violation of s.  
91 810.08 related to this section, whether the defendant was  
92 properly classified as a transient occupant is not an element of  
93 the offense, the state is not required to prove that the  
94 defendant was in fact a transient occupant, and the defendant's  
95 status as a permanent resident is not an affirmative defense.

96 (b) A person wrongfully removed pursuant to this subsection  
97 has a cause of action for wrongful removal against the person  
98 who requested the removal, and may recover injunctive relief and  
99 compensatory damages. However, a wrongfully removed person does  
100 not have a cause of action against the law enforcement officer  
101 or the agency employing the law enforcement officer absent a  
102 showing of bad faith by the law enforcement officer.

103 (4) A party entitled to possession of a dwelling has a  
104 cause of action for unlawful detainer against a transient  
105 occupant pursuant to s. 82.04. The party entitled to possession  
106 is not required to notify the transient occupant before filing  
107 the action. If the court finds that the defendant is not a  
108 transient occupant but is instead a tenant of residential  
109 property governed by part II of chapter 83, the court may not  
110 dismiss the action without first allowing the plaintiff to give  
111 the transient occupant the notice required by that part and to  
112 thereafter amend the complaint to pursue eviction under that  
113 part.

114 (5) The party entitled to possession of a dwelling shall  
115 allow a former transient occupant to recover his or her personal  
116 belongings at reasonable times and under reasonable conditions.

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117        (a) Unless otherwise agreed to, a reasonable time for the  
118 recovery of the former transient occupant's personal belongings  
119 generally means a time period within 10 days after termination  
120 of the transient occupancy, when the party entitled to  
121 possession of the dwelling or a trusted third party can be  
122 present at the dwelling to supervise the recovery of the  
123 belongings.

124        (b) If the party entitled to possession of the dwelling  
125 reasonably believes that the former transient occupant has  
126 engaged in misconduct or has a history of violence or drug or  
127 alcohol abuse, it is reasonable for the party entitled to  
128 possession of the dwelling to impose additional conditions on  
129 access to the dwelling or the personal belongings. These  
130 conditions may include, but are not limited to, the presence of  
131 a law enforcement officer, the use of a mover registered with  
132 the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or the use  
133 of a trusted third party to recover the personal belongings. For  
134 purposes of this paragraph, misconduct includes, but is not  
135 limited to:

136            1. Intentional damage to the dwelling, to property owned by  
137 the party entitled to possession of the dwelling, or to property  
138 owned by another occupant of the dwelling;

139            2. Physical or verbal abuse directed at the party entitled  
140 to possession of the dwelling or another occupant of the  
141 dwelling; or

142            3. Theft of property belonging to the party entitled to  
143 possession of the dwelling or property of another occupant of  
144 the dwelling.

145        (c) The person entitled to possession of a dwelling may

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146 presume that the former transient occupant has abandoned  
147 personal belongings left at the dwelling if the former transient  
148 occupant does not seek to recover them within a reasonable time  
149 after the transient occupant surrenders occupancy of the  
150 dwelling. The time period to recover personal belongings may be  
151 extended due to the unavailability of the party entitled to  
152 possession of the dwelling to supervise the recovery of the  
153 personal belongings. Circumstances that may shorten the time  
154 include, but are not limited to, the poor condition of or the  
155 perishable or hazardous nature of the personal belongings, the  
156 intent of the former transient occupant to abandon or discard  
157 the belongings, or the significant impairment of the use of the  
158 dwelling by the storage of the former transient occupant's  
159 personal belongings.

160 (d) If the person entitled to possession of the dwelling  
161 unreasonably withholds access to a former transient occupant's  
162 personal belongings, the former transient occupant may bring a  
163 civil action for damages or the recovery of the property. The  
164 court shall award the prevailing party reasonable attorney fees  
165 and costs.

166 (6) This section shall be construed in recognition of the  
167 right to exclude others as one of the most essential components  
168 of property rights.

169 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.