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# UNIFORM COMMUNITY PROPERTY DISPOSITION AT DEATH ACT

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMISSIONERS  
ON UNIFORM STATE LAWS

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December 1, 2020 Committee Video Meeting



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November 30, 2020

## UNIFORM COMMUNITY PROPERTY DISPOSITION AT DEATH ACT

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**UNIFORM COMMUNITY PROPERTY DISPOSITION AT DEATH ACT**

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1                   **UNIFORM COMMUNITY PROPERTY DISPOSITION AT DEATH ACT**

2  
3                                   **Prefatory Note**

4                   The Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at Death Act (UDCPRDA) was  
5 approved by the Uniform Law Commission in 1971. The UDCPRDA established a system for  
6 non-community property states to address the treatment of community property acquired by  
7 spouses before they moved from a community property state to the non-community property  
8 state. According to the UDCPRDA, its purpose was “to preserve the rights of each spouse in  
9 property which was community property prior to change of domicile, as well as in property  
10 substituted therefor where the spouses have not indicated an intention to sever or alter their  
11 ‘community’ rights.” Unif. Disp. Comm. Prop. Rights Death Act, Pref. Note, at 3 (1971). As of  
12 2020, sixteen states have enacted the UDCPRDA. Five states enacted the UDCPRDA in the  
13 1970s, shortly after its approval. Or. Rev. Stat. § 112.705; Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 510-21; Colo.  
14 Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-20-101; Ky. Rev. Stat. § 391.210; Mich. Comp. L. Ann. § 557.261.  
15 Another eight states enacted the UDCPRDA in the 1980s. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 31C-1; N.Y. Est.  
16 Powers & Trusts Law § 6-6.1; Ark. Code. Ann. § 28-12-101; Va. Code § 64.1-197; Alaska Stat.  
17 § 13.41.005; Wyo. Stat. § 2-7-720; Conn. Gen. Stat. Ann. § 45a-458; Mont. Code Ann. § 72-9-  
18 101. One state enacted it in the 1992, (Fla. Stat. Ann. § 732.21), and two states – Utah and  
19 Minnesota – enacted the UDCPRDA in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Utah Code § 75-2b-101;  
20 Minn. Stat. § 519A.01.

21                   In its original form, the UDCPRDA offered substantial benefits for citizens in non-  
22 community property states that adopted the act, namely the recognition and protection of  
23 property rights acquired in a community property state in which citizens were formerly  
24 domiciled. Today, this is more important than ever, as Americans are more mobile today than  
25 ever before. It is estimated that 7.5 million people moved one state to another in 2016. *State-to-*  
26 *State Migration Flows: 2016*, available at [https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/geographic-mobility/state-to-state-migration.html)  
27 [series/demo/geographic-mobility/state-to-state-migration.html](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/geographic-mobility/state-to-state-migration.html). Undoubtedly, a significant  
28 subset of that 7.5 million involves Americans moving from one of the nine community property  
29 states to one of the forty-one non-community property states. As Americans migrate, the  
30 property previously acquired in a community property state “does not lose its character by virtue  
31 of a move to a common law state.” *In re Marriage of Moore & Ferrie*, 18 Cal. Rptr. 2d 543  
32 (Court of Appeal, First District, Division 2, 1993); *In re Kessler*, 203 N.E.2d 221 (Ohio 1964);  
33 *Commonwealth v. Terjen*, 90 S.E.2d 801 (Va. 1956). As some commentators have noted, “once  
34 [property] rights are fixed, they cannot be constitutionally changed during the lifetime of the  
35 owner merely by moving the personalty across one or more state lines, regardless of whether  
36 there is or is not a change of domiciles.” William Q. De Funiak, *Conflict of Laws in the*  
37 *Community Property Field*, 7 ARIZ. L. REV. 50, 51 (1966). The Prefatory Note to the  
38 UDCPRDA observes that this is both a matter of policy “and probably a matter of constitutional  
39 law.” Unif. Disp. Comm. Prop. Rights Death Act, Pref. Note (1971).

40                   Under traditional conflicts-of-law principles, the result is the same: a move from a  
41 community property state to a non-community property one does not change the nature of the  
42 property. Sarah N. Welling, *The Uniform Disposition of Community Property at Death Act*, 65  
43 KY. L. J. 541, 545 (1977). The Restatement (Second) of Conflicts counsels that “[a] marital

1 property interest in a chattel, or right embodied in a document, which has been acquired by either  
2 or both of the spouses, is not affected by the mere removal of the chattel or document to a second  
3 state, whether or not this removal is accompanied by a change of domicile to the other state on  
4 the part of one or both of the spouses.” RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF CONFLICTS OF LAW § 259  
5 (1971). Nevertheless, the law in non-community property states on this matter is often unclear.  
6 The UDCRPDA provided a relatively simple solution that served to clarify an otherwise murky  
7 area of law.

8 Since its original promulgation in 1971, however, many changes in the law of marital  
9 property and in estate planning practice have occurred. The rise of the popularity of non-probate  
10 transfers and the recognition of same-sex marriage throughout the United State are just some of  
11 the significant changes in the law that could not have been foreseen or accounted for in the  
12 original UDCPRDA. Consequently, an update of the act is needed to accommodate these  
13 changes and others, as well as to reexamine some underlying policy choices made in the original  
14 act some fifty year ago.

15 This Uniform Community Property Disposition at Death Act (UCPDDA) revises and  
16 updates UDCPRDA. Like its predecessor, the UCPDDA preserves the community property  
17 character of property acquired by spouses while domiciled in a community property jurisdiction,  
18 even after their move to a non-community property state. Unlike its predecessor, however, the  
19 UCPDDA broadens the applicability of the act, insofar as it preserves some rights that spouses  
20 would have had in the community property jurisdiction for certain bad faith acts or acts of  
21 mismanagement of community property by a spouse, whereas the UDCPRDA “only define[d]  
22 the dispositive rights, at death, of a married person as to his interests at death in property” subject  
23 to the act.

24 Section 3 sets forth the applicability of the UCPDDA and the property to which it applies,  
25 namely, only the property acquired by spouses while domiciled in a community property  
26 jurisdiction, as well as any rents, profits, issues, or traceable mutations of that property. Once  
27 spouses move to a non-community property state, their newly acquired marital property is  
28 governed by the law in that state.

29 Section 4 makes clear that if the spouses have partitioned their community property, the  
30 UCPDDA no longer applies to that property, as the spouses themselves have ended the  
31 community property classification of the property and mutually allocated to each other separate  
32 property interests that were previously held as community.

33 Section 5 assists courts and the parties in evidentiary matters of proof in applying the  
34 UCPDDA. Specifically, even if two spouses are married under a community regime in a  
35 community property state, they may still acquire separate property that is owned individually and  
36 is not part of their community regime. Community property states generally impose a  
37 presumption that all property acquired by either spouse during the existence of their community  
38 is presumed to be community, unless a spouse can demonstrate to the contrary. Section 5 adopts  
39 the same type of rebuttable presumption, such that a party asserting the applicability of this act  
40 would need to prove only that the property was acquired while domiciled in a community  
41 property jurisdiction under a community property regime and not that the property was acquired

1 while domiciled in a community property jurisdiction and that the relevant property was not  
2 acquired separately. It was thought that any other rule might make proof of application of the act  
3 too difficult, given the passage of time, the absence of records, and the fading of memories  
4 between the time when the property was originally acquired and the time of death of the  
5 decedent.

6 Section 6 is the heart of the act. It provides that upon the death of one spouse, half the  
7 property to which this act applies belongs to the decedent and the other half to the surviving  
8 spouse. This is the same result that would be achieved at the death of one spouse in a  
9 community property jurisdiction.

10 Section 7 is new and has no analogue in the UDCPRDA. It expands the applicability of  
11 this act to allow a court to adjudicate claims for certain bad faith actions by one spouse that  
12 might impair the rights of the other spouse with respect to property to which this act applies.  
13 One such example could be the unauthorized alienation of property to the prejudice of the other  
14 spouse. This section allows for a damage or equitable claim to be brought at the death of one  
15 spouse by the other or by his personal representative, provided a spouse's interest in property  
16 was prejudiced by the actions of the other spouse.

17 Section 8 provides limitations periods within which a party must act to preserve rights  
18 under this act.

19 Section 9 protects third persons who have transacted in good faith and for value.  
20 Otherwise, third persons could be subject to claims by a spouse under Section 7 if the spouse  
21 engages in some acts of bad faith management of community property while alive. Similarly,  
22 Section 8 may grant beneficiaries of the decedent or the surviving spouse of the decedent rights  
23 against third persons for unauthorized alienations. Section 9 ensures that in most instances, third  
24 persons will be protected from these claims.



1 amendments also attempt to broadly define the term spouse to include any “relationship under  
2 which community property could have been acquired” (e.g., marriage, domestic or registered  
3 partnerships, common law marriages, and putative spouses), provided such a relationship is  
4 recognized as valid under conflicts of law principles in the enacting states. See, e.g.,  
5 Restatement (Second) of Conflict of Laws § 283 (“A marriage which satisfies the requirements  
6 of the state where the marriage was contracted will everywhere be recognized as valid unless it  
7 violates the strong public policy of another state which had the most significant relationship to  
8 the spouses and the marriage at the time of the marriage.”).

### 9 10 **Comment**

11  
12 (1) *Jurisdiction*. The term “jurisdiction” is included in this act in order to ensure the  
13 applicability of this act to individuals who acquired community property in a foreign country.  
14 For example, if a couple were married in Cuba, a community property jurisdiction, and acquired  
15 stock while domiciled there but sold the stock after moving to Florida, a non-community  
16 jurisdiction, the widow of the spouse in whose name the stock was registered would have a one-  
17 half interest in the property. See, e.g., *Quintana v. Ordone*, 195 So. 2d 577 (Dist. Ct. Fla. 3d Cir.  
18 1967).

19  
20 (2) *Partition*. The term “partition” is defined to mean a severance or division by spouses  
21 of property that was community property or treated as community property. A partition may  
22 occur while the parties are domiciled in a community property state or after they move to a non-  
23 community property state. In the latter case, a partition can still occur irrespective of whether the  
24 property retains its community property character in the new state or is merely treated as  
25 community property for purposes of application of this act.

26  
27 (3) *Person*. The definition of “person” is based upon the standard Uniform Law  
28 Commission definition.

29  
30 (4) *Spouse*. The term “spouse” is defined expansively to include not only married  
31 persons, of either sex, but also partners in other arrangements, such as domestic or registered  
32 partnerships, under which community property may be acquired. See, e.g., Cal. Fam Code §  
33 297.5 (stating that domestic partners “have the same rights, protections and benefits, and are  
34 subject to the same responsibilities, obligations and duties under law, whether derived from  
35 statutes, administrative regulations, court rules, government policies, common law, or any other  
36 provisions or sources of law, as are granted to and imposed upon spouses”); Nev. Rev. Stat. §  
37 122A.200. The term may also encompass putative spouses and spouses under common law or  
38 informal marriages. The putative spouse doctrine is a remedial doctrine recognized in many  
39 states that allows a person in good faith to enjoy community property and other civil effects of  
40 marriage, despite not being a party to a legally valid marriage. See, e.g., Unif. Marriage & Div.  
41 Act § 209. Although few, if any, community property states recognize common law marriage,  
42 Texas does recognize “informal marriages” and thus parties to such an arrangement could also be  
43 included in the definition of a “spouse” under this act. See, e.g., Tex. Fam. Code § 2.401. In all  
44 events, recognition of the validity of the marriage or marriage-like arrangement by this state is  
45 dependent upon the treatment of that arrangement as valid under the conflict-of-law principles of  
46 this state.

1 (5) *State*. The definition of “state” is based upon the standard Uniform Law Commission  
2 definition.

3  
4 **SECTION 3. INCLUDED AND EXCLUDED PROPERTY.**

5 (a) This [act] applies to the following property of a spouse who formerly was domiciled  
6 in a jurisdiction where property could be acquired as community property, without regard to how  
7 the property currently is titled or held:

8 (1) if a decedent was domiciled in this state at the time of death,

9 (A) all or a proportionate part of each item of personal property, wherever  
10 located, that was community property under the law of the jurisdiction where the decedent or the  
11 surviving spouse of the decedent was domiciled at the time of acquisition;

12 (B) income, rents, or profits, and appreciations or other increases,

13 (i) derived from property described in paragraph (a) (1)(A) or (a)  
14 (1)(C); or

15 (ii) that were characterized as community property under the law  
16 of the jurisdiction where the decedent or the surviving spouse of the decedent was domiciled at  
17 the time of its creation or production;

18 (C) property traceable to property described in paragraph (1) (A) and  
19 (1)(B);

20 (2) whether or not a decedent was domiciled in this state at the time of death,

21 (A) all or a proportionate part of each item of real property located in this  
22 state that was traceable to community property or acquired with community property under the  
23 law of the jurisdiction where the decedent or the surviving spouse of the decedent was domiciled  
24 at the time of acquisition;

25 (B) income, rents, or profits, and appreciations or other increases, derived

1 from property described in paragraph (2) (A).

2 (b) This [act] does not apply to the following property:

3 (1) property that has been partitioned between spouses;

4 (2) property subject to a waiver of rights granted by this act;

5 (c) [Except for purposes of calculating the augmented estate and elective share rights, ]

6 Section 6 of this [act] does not apply to the following property:

7 (1) property, which at the death of the decedent, was held by spouses with a right  
8 of survivorship in favor of the surviving spouse; and

9 (2) property held in a form, including a revocable trust, that was paid or was  
10 transferred on death of the decedent to the surviving spouse.

### 11 **Reporter’s Notes**

12  
13 The amendment regarding “income, rents, or profits, and appreciations or other  
14 increases” attempts to capture income of property that is traceable to community property by  
15 including a new reference to (a)(1)(C) in section (a)(1)(B). In addition, provision (a)(1)(B)(ii)  
16 attempts to capture income from separate property in those states where such income is  
17 considered community property but not those states where income of separate property is  
18 separate. At the same time, it attempts to capture the law in those states that would grant a  
19 community property interest in the “appreciations or other increases” in separate property that  
20 result from community effort or expenditures of “time, toil, or talent” of a spouse in community.  
21

22 The amendment to this section also combines this section with various exclusions from  
23 former Section 4 of the act. It excludes certain classes or property from this act, such as property  
24 partitioned or property to which rights under this act have been waived because spouses have  
25 indicated a desire that the property should no longer be treated as community property. Property  
26 held with rights of survivorship or in transfer-on-death forms, however, are excluded only from  
27 Section 6 this act, which provides how property subject to this act is disposed of upon death.  
28 These classes of property are excluded from Section 6 because the spouses themselves have  
29 either expressly or tacitly provided for other mechanisms of disposition at death. Section 7 of  
30 this act, however, may still be relevant if less than a one-half interest in the property has been  
31 transferred to the surviving spouse at death.  
32

### 33 **Comment**

34  
35 This section makes the act applicable to spouses who were formerly domiciled in a  
36 community property jurisdiction. The term “jurisdiction” is used, rather than the narrower term

1 “state,” to be clear that this act would apply to a spouse who was domiciled in foreign  
2 jurisdictions where community property may be acquired. The term “formerly ... domiciled” is  
3 used to indicate that the act will be applicable whenever a spouse was domiciled at any time in  
4 the past in a community property jurisdiction, has acquired property there, and has moved to  
5 another jurisdiction. Thus, if A and B were married in state X (a community property state) and  
6 acquired property there, but then moved to state Y (a non-community property state) prior to  
7 moving again to state Z (also a non-community property state) where A eventually dies, state Z  
8 should apply this act to the property acquired by A and B in state X.  
9

10 Under subsection (1), the act applies to all personal property that was originally classified  
11 as a community property by the state at the time in which it was acquired. The current location  
12 of the personal property is not relevant for application of this act. Thus, if A and B were married  
13 in state X (a community property state), acquired a car there, and eventually moved to state Z (a  
14 non-community property state) where A eventually dies, then the car would be subject to this act,  
15 even if the car was left in storage in state Y.  
16

17 Under subsection (2), this act adopts the traditional situs rule for real estate and is made  
18 applicable to all real estate located in a state where this act has been adopted, irrespective of  
19 whether the party to whom the act applies is domiciled in the enacting state. Thus, if A and B,  
20 while domiciled in a state X (a community property state) acquire real estate with community  
21 funds in state Y (a non-community property state), but then move to state Z (also a non-  
22 community property state), where A eventually dies, then this act will apply to the real estate in  
23 state Y, assuming state Y has enacted this act. Whether or not state Z has enacted this act will be  
24 important in ascertaining how the personal property of A is distributed, but not in the disposition  
25 of the real estate, located in state Y.  
26

27 Under both section (1) and (2), this act applies to “all or a proportionate part” of property  
28 that was acquired with community property. In other words, when an asset is acquired partly  
29 with community property and partly with separate property, at least some portion of the property  
30 should be characterized as community property. The issue of apportionment and commingling,  
31 however, is a complex one with many state variations applicable to different types of assets.

32 In some community property states, an “inception of title” theory is used, such that the  
33 characterization of the property is dependent upon the characterization of the right at the time of  
34 acquisition. For example, a house acquired in a credit sale before marriage would remain separate  
35 property under an “inception of title” theory even if the vast majority of the payments were made  
36 after marriage and with community funds. In this instance, the community would have a claim for  
37 reimbursement for the amount of funds expended for the separate property of the acquiring spouse.  
38 Section 7 of this act accommodates reimbursement claims, if such a claim would be appropriate  
39 under the law of the relevant jurisdiction. In other jurisdictions, a “pro rata” approach is employed,  
40 which provides for a combination of community and separate ownership based in proportion to  
41 the payments contributed by either the community or the spouses separately. The act  
42 accommodates this approach by not requiring an “all or nothing” classification of community  
43 property. Rather, the act is applicable when “all or the proportionate part” of property would be  
44 community property according to the law of a jurisdiction in which the spouse was formerly  
45 domiciled at the time of acquisition.

1 Even among states that employ a “pro rata” approach, there is considerable variation for  
2 how the apportionment is made. As the comments in the UDCPRDA stated, “[a]ttempts at  
3 defining the various types of situations which could arise and the varying approaches which could  
4 be taken, depending upon the state, suggest that the matter simply be left to court decision as to  
5 what portion would, under applicable choice of law rules, be treated as community property.” The  
6 UCPDDA follows the same approach. Thus, if A acquires \$100,000 of life insurance, pays five  
7 of the monthly \$1000 premiums from funds prior to marriage, pays 10 of the premiums with  
8 community property after marrying B, and pays 10 more premiums (before dying) from earnings  
9 acquired by B after A and B move to a non-community property state, then some portion of the  
10 life insurance policy should be considered community property, if the law of the community  
11 property state so treated it. This act leaves discretion to the courts as to how the apportionment is  
12 made.

13 Under subsection (1)(B) and (2)(B), income, rents, or profits derived from community  
14 property are also subject to this act, as well as appreciations or other increases in community  
15 property. This section should be read to include net income, rather than gross income, from  
16 community property, as well as things produced from community property (i.e., “appreciations  
17 and other increases”), even if not technically revenue producing. Thus, if a \$500,000 house were  
18 purchased completely with community funds and increased in value to \$700,000 after spouses  
19 moved to a non-community property state, then the entire house, not merely \$500,000 in value,  
20 is classified as community property. Similarly, crops produced from a community property farm  
21 and a foal produced from a horse that is owned as community property are also considered to be  
22 community property.  
23

24 Subsections (1)(B) and (2)(B) also apply not only to income, rents, and profits from  
25 community property produced prior to moving to a non-community property jurisdiction, but  
26 also after the move. Indeed, in the former case, such a rule would be unnecessary as all  
27 community property states already characterize income, rents, or profits derived from, as well as  
28 appreciations or other increases in, community property as community property. The rule in  
29 subsections (1)(B) and (2)(B), however, is necessary to be clear that even after spouses move to a  
30 non-community property state, the incomes, rents, and profits produced by community property  
31 acquired prior to the move are still community property after the move to a non-community  
32 property state. Thus, interest produced from a community property savings account is still  
33 community property after A and B move from state X (a community property state) to state Z (a  
34 non-community property state), irrespective of the location of the account.  
35

36 As should be clear, this Section applies not only to property that was community property  
37 under the law of the community property state but also to any property that is traceable to  
38 community property. Simply stated, property is “traceable” to community property if the  
39 property changes form without changing character. WILLIAM A. REPPY, CYNTHIA A. SAMUEL,  
40 AND SALLY BROWN RICHARDSON, COMMUNITY PROPERTY IN THE UNITED STATES 161 (2015)  
41 (quoting W. BROCKELBANK, THE COMMUNITY PROPERTY LAW OF IDAHO 134 (1964)). By way of  
42 illustration, if after moving from a state X (a community property state) to state Z (a non-  
43 community property state), A and B transfer money from a community property bank account  
44 opened in state X to a bank in their new domicile, state Z, then the bank account in state Z is  
45 subject to this act because it is traceable to community property. Similarly, if A and B are



1 designation of a spouse as a beneficiary of the property on the death of the other spouse creates a  
2 strong presumption that the spouses agreed to retitle the property and voluntarily sever their  
3 community interests.

4  
5 **SECTION 5. REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION.** Property acquired by a spouse when  
6 domiciled in a jurisdiction where property could then be acquired by the spouse as community  
7 property is presumed to be community property, if the spouse has complied with the necessary  
8 procedures for acquiring community property. The presumption may be rebutted by a  
9 preponderance of the evidence.

### 10 **Reporter’s Notes**

11  
12 The amendment attempts to accommodate so-called “opt-in” states where spouses can  
13 elect community property provided specific affirmative steps are taken to acquire property  
14 during marriage as community property.

### 15 **Comment**

16  
17  
18 This section adopts a blanket presumption in favor of treating all property acquired by a  
19 spouse while domiciled in a community property jurisdiction as community property, provided,  
20 of course, that the laws of the community property state allowed community property to “then be  
21 acquired” by *that* person. In other words, the presumption applies only to those persons who  
22 could acquire community property under the laws of the relevant jurisdiction and have complied  
23 with the necessary laws to do at the time of acquisition. Consequently, the presumption does  
24 not apply to unmarried individuals or to those who have opted out of the community regime even  
25 if they acquire property while domiciled in a community property jurisdiction, as those  
26 individuals could not then acquire community property in that jurisdiction. Similarly, in  
27 jurisdictions that allow for parties to “opt in” to community property, the presumption of this  
28 section does not apply unless the parties have, in fact, opted into the community regime, as  
29 property could not “then be acquired” as community property absent an election by the parties  
30 that their property be treated as community property. See, e.g., Alaska Stat. § 34.77.030(a).

31  
32 Although stated in various ways, the blanket presumption of this section is common in  
33 community property jurisdictions. See, e.g., N.M. Stat. Ann. § 40-3-12(A) (“Property acquired  
34 during marriage by either husband or wife, or both, is presumed to be community property.”);  
35 Wisc. Stat. § 766.31(2) (“All property of spouse is presumed to be marital property.”); Tex. Fam.  
36 Code § 3.003(a) (“Property possessed by either spouse during or on dissolution of marriage is  
37 presumed to be community property”); La. Civ. Code art. 2340 (“Things in the possession of a  
38 spouse during the existence of a regime of community of acquets and gains are presumed to be  
39 community, but either spouse may prove they are separate property.”); Cal. Fam. Code § 760;  
40 Unif. Marital Prop. Act. § 4(a) (“All property of spouses is marital property except that which is  
41 classified otherwise by this Act.”).

1 Despite the above presumption, a party may prove that the relevant property was  
2 separate, even though acquired during the existence of a community regime, such as by  
3 demonstrating that the property was acquired by inheritance. Although different community  
4 property states provide different standards for rebutting the relevant presumption of community  
5 property, this act adopts a preponderance standard for rebutting the presumption, as have a  
6 number of community property states. *See, e.g., Marriage of Ettefagh*, 59 Cal. Rptr. 3<sup>rd</sup> 419  
7 (Cal. App. 2007); *Talbot v. Talbot*, 864 So. 2d 590 (La. 2003); *Brandt v. Brandt*, 427 N.W. 2d  
8 126 (Wisc. App. 1988); *Sanchez v. Sanchez*, 748 P.2d 21 (N.M. App. 1987); *But see* Tex. Fam.  
9 Code § 3.03(b) (“The degree of proof necessary to establish that property is separate property is  
10 clear and convincing evidence.”); *Reed v. Reed*, 44 P.3d 1100 (Idaho 2002) (requiring  
11 “reasonable certainty and particularity” to rebut the presumption).

12  
13 Unlike the prior version of this act, this act does not impose a presumption against the  
14 applicability of this act for property acquired in a non-community property state and held in a  
15 form that creates rights of survivorship. Taking title to property in various forms is often a  
16 unilateral act that should not by itself serve as a presumption of partition of interests in a  
17 community asset. After all, a spouse may move to non-community property state and open a  
18 bank account with a pay-on-death designation to a friend or a sibling. Such an account should  
19 not be presumed to be excluded from this applicability of this act, as the relevant account may  
20 have been funded with community property acquired prior to the move. The ultimate treatment  
21 of the relevant account will depend upon whether it can be proved that the money in the account  
22 was traceable to community property.

## 23 24 **SECTION 6. DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS UPON DEATH.**

25 (a) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b), one-half of the property to which this  
26 [act] applies belongs to the surviving spouse of the decedent and is not subject to disposition by  
27 the decedent at death.

28 (b) If, at death, the decedent purported to dispose of property belonging to the surviving  
29 spouse to a third person and disposed of other property to the surviving spouse, the court may  
30 require the surviving spouse to elect between retaining the disposition to the surviving spouse or  
31 asserting rights under this [act].

32 (c) One-half of the property to which this [act] applies belongs to the decedent and is  
33 subject to disposition by the decedent at death.

34 [Option 1 (Traditional Elective Share States): The property that belongs to the  
35 decedent is not subject to elective-share rights of the surviving spouse.]



1 If the decedent disposes of the surviving spouse's share of property under this act but  
2 transfers other property to the surviving spouse, a court may require the surviving spouse to  
3 make an equitable election to retain the disposition from the decedent or assert rights under this  
4 act.

5  
6 Under subsection (c), at the death of one spouse, one-half the property to which this act  
7 applies belongs to the decedent. Again, this is universal approach of community property states.  
8 As a result, the decedent can dispose of that property by any probate or non-probate mechanism.  
9 Elective share rights that are common in non-community property states do not apply in  
10 community property states, at least not with respect to community property in those states.  
11 Consequently, a surviving spouse does not have elective share rights against the decedent's share  
12 of the property under this act. Subsection (b), however, does not limit a surviving spouse's claim  
13 for other statutory allowances, such as homestead allowances, allowances for exempt property,  
14 and family allowances. See, e.g., Unif. Prob. Code §§ 2-402, 2-403, and 2-404.

15  
16 If the decedent dies intestate, then one-half of the property covered by this act is included  
17 in the decedent's intestate estate. Under many scenarios, the intestate law of most states would  
18 grant to the surviving spouse a lump sum plus at least one half of the remainder of the decedent's  
19 property, which would be in addition to the one-half interest granted to the surviving spouse in  
20 property to which this act applies.

21  
22 By way of illustration of this section, assume A and B were formerly domiciled in state X  
23 (a community property jurisdiction) where all their property was community property, and have  
24 subsequently moved to a state Y (a non-community property state). Upon moving to state Y, A  
25 and B acquired a home in state Z (also a non-community property jurisdiction), titled solely in  
26 B's name but with funds from the proceeds of the sale of the home in state X. A and B also  
27 acquired stock while domiciled in state X, but held it in safety deposit boxes located in states U  
28 and V (two other non-community property states). A and B also retained a summer house in  
29 state X, which they acquired while domiciled there and which was titled solely in B's name. A  
30 and B also acquired real property in state Z for investment purposes and held title as tenants by  
31 the entirety. Finally, B acquired bonds held in B's name issued by the company that employed  
32 B and acquired with earnings from B's job in state Z.

33  
34 At B's death, the home in state Z and the stock located in states U and V would be  
35 property subject this act, and consequently, B would have the right under this section to dispose  
36 of half. The home retained in state X would be community property under the law of state X, but  
37 this act applies only to real property located in the adopting state. Because the investment  
38 property located in state Z was held as tenants by the entirety, it is strongly presumed that A  
39 and B partitioned that property and thus made this act inapplicable to that asset. Finally, the  
40 bonds held in B's name would not be subject to this act because they were acquired with  
41 property earned and acquired in state Z, a non-community property state.

42  
43 **SECTION 7. OTHER LEGAL AND EQUITABLE REMEDIES AVAILABLE AT**  
44 **DEATH.** With respect to property to which this [act] applies, at the death of the decedent, the

1 surviving spouse of the decedent or the personal representative, heirs, creditors, or nonprobate  
2 transferees of the decedent may assert a right:  
3 (1) on account of:  
4 (A) act of the surviving spouse or decedent during the marriage; or  
5 (B) act of the decedent which takes effect at the death of the decedent; and  
6 (2) that could have been asserted under the law of the community property jurisdiction  
7 where the decedent or the surviving spouse was formerly domiciled at the time the property was  
8 acquired.

9 **Reporter’s Note**

10  
11 The amendment to this section changes the prior version of the draft to make clear that  
12 this section applies to “rights” rather than “procedural claims.” It was also expanded to cover  
13 heirs, creditors and nonprobate transferees who may assert rights other than those granted by  
14 Section 6 due to nonprobate transfers of the decedent.  
15

16 **Comment**

17  
18 This section confirms that comparable legal and equitable remedies that would be  
19 available to protect a spouse in a community property jurisdiction remain available at death in a  
20 non-community property state under this act. Two remedies often provided by community  
21 property jurisdictions are claims for reimbursement and monetary claims against a spouse for  
22 marital waste, fraud, or bad faith management.  
23

24 Claims for reimbursement are commonly available when community property has been  
25 used to satisfy a separate obligation or when separate property has been used to improve  
26 community property or vice versa, *see, e.g.*, La. Civ. Code art. 2364, 2366, and 2367; Cal. Fam.  
27 Code § 2640. Different community property states calculate the amount of reimbursement  
28 differently. *See, e.g., Hiatt v. Hiatt*, 487 P.2d 1121 (Idaho 1971) (awarding reimbursement based  
29 upon the enhanced value of the property even if it exceeds the amount spent); *Portillo v.*  
30 *Shappie*, 636 P.2d 878 (N.M. 1981) (assessing reimbursement based upon the enhanced value of  
31 the improved property even if it exceeds the amount of money expended); La. Civ. Code art.  
32 2366 (providing for reimbursement based upon the amount expended); *Marriage of Sedlock*, 849  
33 P.2d 1243 (Wash. App. 1993) (awarding reimbursement based upon the amount spent); Estate of  
34 *Kobyliski v. Hellstern*, 503 N.W.2d 369 (Wis. App. 1993) (assessing reimbursement based upon  
35 the greater of the amount spent or the value added). This section grants courts flexibility in  
36 assessing the amount of the reimbursement.  
37  
38

1 Different community property states also provide different remedies to a spouse whose  
2 community property interest has been unduly impaired by another spouse with authority to  
3 manage or alienate community property. In California, for example, a court may award a  
4 defrauded spouse a percentage interest or an amount equal to a percentage interest in any asset  
5 transferred in breach of a spouse’s fiduciary duty. Cal. Fam. Code § 1101. In Texas, the  
6 doctrine of “fraud on the community” protects one spouse when the other wrongfully depletes  
7 community property through actual or constructive fraud by allowing a court to allocate other  
8 property to the defrauded spouse through any legal or equitable remedy necessary, including a  
9 money judgment or a constructive trust. See, e.g., Tex. Fam. Code § 7.009; *see also Osuna v.*  
10 *Quintana*, 993 S.W.2d 201 (Tex. Ct. App. Corpus Christi 1999) (“The breach of a legal or  
11 equitable duty which violates the fiduciary relationship existing between spouses is termed  
12 ‘fraud on the community,’ a judicially created concept based on the theory of constructive  
13 fraud.”). In Louisiana, a spouse may be awarded damages when the other spouse acted  
14 fraudulently or in bad faith. See La. Civ. Code art. 2354 (“A spouse is liable for any loss or  
15 damage caused by fraud or bad faith in the management of the community property.”). In  
16 addition to damages and equitable relief, some community property states statutorily grant courts  
17 authority to add the name of a spouse to a community asset titled solely in the name of the other  
18 spouse in order to protect the interest of the previously unnamed spouse. See, e.g., Cal. Fam.  
19 Code § 1101 (c); Wisc. Stat. § 766.70(3). This section provides the court with broad authority to  
20 grant damages or to craft any other appropriate equitable remedy necessary to protect a spouse.  
21

22 The rights granted by this section are operable at the death of an individual and may not  
23 be asserted during the existence of the marriage. This approach is consistent with the law of  
24 various community property jurisdictions. See, e.g., La. Civ. Code art. 2358 (“A claim for  
25 reimbursement may be asserted only after termination of the community property regime, unless  
26 otherwise provided by law.”). *But see* Uniform Marital Property Act § 13 (allowing claims for  
27 breach of the duty of good faith and for an accounting to be brought by spouses during an  
28 ongoing marriage). The relief sought under this section may, however, be for actions of a spouse  
29 taken either during life or that take effect at death. For instance, during life, a spouse may use  
30 community funds to augment a separate property asset. Moreover, a spouse during the marriage  
31 may have inappropriately donated property to a third person. Similarly, at the death of the  
32 decedent, the decedent may have inappropriately transferred property belonging to the surviving  
33 spouse to a third person by non-probate transfer. Although community property states generally  
34 enforce such transfers, they correspondingly grant a claim for damages, recovery, or  
35 reimbursement to the surviving spouse. Again, this section grants a court broad authority to craft  
36 legal or equitable remedies to protect a spouse. Of course, the application of this section must  
37 yield when appropriate to federal law. See, e.g., Employment Retirement Security Act, 29  
38 U.S.C. Section 1001 et seq.; *Boggs v. Boggs*, 520 U.S. 833 (1997) (holding that ERISA pre-  
39 empted state community property law and remedies, even though the relevant ERISA-governed  
40 retirement plan was funded with community property).  
41

42 Although most instances of application of this section will involve monetary claims  
43 against by one spouse against another, this section does preserve other “equitable relief,” which  
44 may involve recognition of rights against third persons to whom property has been transferred by  
45 one spouse without authorization of the other. Equitable doctrines, such as a “constructive  
46 trust,” are common remedies used by courts to protect the interest of a spouse. This section,

1 however, must be read in conjunction with Section 9 of this act, which protects good faith  
2 transferees of property from one spouse who give value. Thus, good faith transferees for value  
3 will be protected by Section 9 of this act, such that a spouse's claim for bad faith management  
4 would solely be cognizable against the other spouse. If, however, one spouse improperly  
5 donates or transfers property to which this act applies to a third person who is not in good faith,  
6 equitable relief against a third person may, in the discretion of the court, be available to the  
7 spouse whose rights are impaired. After all, improper gifts of community property by one spouse  
8 are generally voidable as against a third person in community property jurisdictions. *See, e.g.,*  
9 *Polk v. Polk*, 39 Cal. Rptr. 824 (App. 1964); Wisc. Stat. § 766.70; La. Civ. Code art. 2353;  
10 *Mezey v. Fioramonti*, 65 P.2d 980 (Ariz. App. 2003); Uniform Marital Property Act § 6(b).

11  
12 **SECTION 8. RIGHTS OF SURVIVING SPOUSE, HEIR, BENEFICIARY, AND**  
13 **CREDITOR.**

14 (a) In this section, "record" means information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or  
15 that is stored in an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form.

16 (b) With respect to property to which this [act] applies, the surviving spouse of the  
17 decedent may assert a claim for relief

18 (1) in a probate proceeding by sending a demand in a record to the personal  
19 representative of the decedent not later than [six months] after the appointment of the personal  
20 representative. If the surviving spouse does not send the demand, the personal representative  
21 does not have a duty to apply this [act], or

22 (2) in an action to perfect title to property, in an action asserting a right to a  
23 nonprobate asset, or in the absence of a probate proceeding, by commencing a judicial  
24 proceeding against the heirs, devisees, or nonprobate transferees of the decedent not later than  
25 [three years] after the death of the decedent.

26 (c) With respect to property to which this [act] applies, an heir, a devisee, or a nonprobate  
27 transferee of the decedent may assert a claim for relief

28 (1) in a probate proceeding by sending a demand in a record to the personal  
29 representative of the decedent not later than [six months] after the appointment of the personal

1 representative, or

2 (2) in an action to perfect title to property, an action asserting a right to a  
3 nonprobate asset, or in the absence of a probate proceeding, by commencing a judicial  
4 proceeding against the surviving spouse of the decedent not later than [three years] after the  
5 death of the decedent.

6 (d) With respect to property to which this [act] applies, the personal representative of the  
7 decedent may institute an action to perfect title to property or an action asserting a right to a  
8 nonprobate asset by commencing a judicial proceeding against the surviving spouse of the  
9 decedent not later than [three years] after the death of the decedent.

10 (e) With respect to property to which this [act] applies, all claims by creditors of the  
11 decedent are barred, unless presented within the earlier of the following:

12 [(1) one year after the decedent's death; or

13 (2) for creditors barred by publication, within four months after the date of first  
14 publication of notice of the appointment of the personal representative; and for creditors to  
15 whom actual notice was given, within the later of 60 days after the mailing or other delivery of  
16 notice to a creditor to present his claim or within four months after published notice.]

17 ***Legislative Note:***

18  
19 *In Subsection (b) and (c), a state should insert in (b)(1) and (c)(1) the relevant time frame for*  
20 *asserting claims to be asserted in a probate proceeding and in (b)(2) and (c)(2) the relevant time*  
21 *frame for asserting claims to nonprobate assets or for probating wills or challenging revocable*  
22 *trusts.*

23  
24 *In Subsection (d), a state should insert the relevant time frame for asserting claims to*  
25 *nonprobate assets or for probating wills or challenging revocable trusts.*

26 *In Subsection (e) of this act, a state should insert or reference its existing non-claim statutes with*  
27 *regard to the time frames for asserting creditor claims.*

1 **Reporter's Notes**

2 Subsection (b) provides time frames for a surviving spouse asserting a right under this act  
3 either in a probate proceeding (see (b)(1)) or outside the probate process in the case of an action  
4 to perfect title to property, nonprobate assets, or no probate proceedings (see (b)(2).  
5

6 Subsection (c) provides time frames for a heirs, creditors, or nonprobate transferees for  
7 asserting a right under this act either in a probate proceeding (see (c)(1)) or outside the probate  
8 process in the case of an action to perfect title to property, nonprobate assets, or no probate  
9 proceedings (see (c)(2).  
10

11 Subsection (d) provides time frames for a personal representative of the decedent to  
12 recover nonprobate property or perfect title in probate property after being notified by heirs or  
13 devisees that probate property is held by the surviving spouse.  
14

15 Subsection (e) is based upon UPC 3-803, regarding the time frames for creditors asserting  
16 claims.  
17

18 **Comment**  
19

20 Subsection (b) of this section allows a surviving spouse to protect rights under this act  
21 and provides a statute of limitation for doing so. Namely, a surviving spouse must institute an  
22 action against the successors of the decedent within three years of the date of death of the  
23 decedent. Although not required, a surviving spouse may also file a written demand with the  
24 personal representative of the decedent. Unless the surviving spouse does so within six months  
25 of the opening of decedent's estate, the personal representative has no fiduciary duty to  
26 investigate or to attempt to ascertain whether this act applies to any property owned by the  
27 decedent.  
28

29 Subsection (c) of this section allows the personal representative, an heir, or a beneficiary  
30 of the decedent to protect rights under this act and provides a statute of limitation for doing so.  
31 Namely, an action must be instituted against the surviving spouse within three years of the date of  
32 death of the decedent. Although not required, the heirs, beneficiaries or creditors of the decedent  
33 may attempt to protect their interests by filing a written demand with the personal representative  
34 of the decedent within six months of the opening of decedent's estate. Unlike in subsection (b) of  
35 this section, the personal representative of the decedent has an obligation to attempt to ascertain  
36 whether the decedent has property rights that should be protected under this act. See, e.g., Unif.  
37 Prob. Code §§ 3-703 (general duties) & 3-706 (duty to prepare an inventory).  
38

39 The time periods provided in this section are generally borrowed from other areas of law.  
40 Specifically, a six-month period is not an uncommon period for a non-claim statute for creditors  
41 and the three-year period is adapted from claims challenging revocable trusts and for contesting  
42 nonprobated wills. See Unif. Trust Code § 604; Unif. Prob. Code § 3-108.  
43

1           **SECTION 9. PROTECTION OF THIRD PERSON.**

2           (a) A person is not liable under this [act] to the extent the person, with respect to property  
3 to which this act applies:

4                   (1) transacts, in good faith and for value:

5                           (A) with a spouse; or

6                           (B) after the death of the decedent, with a surviving spouse, personal  
7 representative, heir, or beneficiary; and

8                   (2) does not know that the other party to the transaction is exceeding or  
9 improperly exercising the party’s authority.

10           (b) Good faith under subsection (a) does not require a person to inquire into the extent of  
11 propriety of the exercise of authority by the other party to the transaction.

12   **Comment**

13  
14           This section is based upon Section 1012 of the Uniform Trust Code. Like the Uniform  
15 Trust Code, this section does not define “good faith.” It does, however, require that a third  
16 person be without knowledge that the other party to the transaction is acting without authority  
17 with respect to property to which this act applies. For a definition of knowledge, see Unif. Trust  
18 Code § 104. Moreover, this section makes clear that a person dealing with another party is not  
19 charged with a duty to inquire as to the extent of the property of the exercise of the purported  
20 power or authority of that party. This section, like the Uniform Trust Code, acknowledges that a  
21 definition of good faith that is consistent with a state’s commercial statutes, such as Section 1-  
22 201 of the Uniform Commercial Code, would be consistent with the purpose of this section.  
23 This section should be read in conjunction with Section 7 of this act, which provides that courts  
24 retain the ability at the death of one spouse to grant equitable relief to the other for actions that  
25 have impaired rights granted by this act.

26  
27           This section protects third persons in two different situations. First, during life, both  
28 spouses may engage in a variety of transactions with third parties concerning the property to  
29 which this act applies. This section protects third persons who deal with either spouse  
30 concerning property to which this act applies, provided the third person gives value, is in good  
31 faith, and does not have knowledge that the spouse who is a party to the transaction is improperly  
32 exercising authority over property. Although third persons are ordinarily allowed to deal with a  
33 spouse who has apparent title concerning a martial asset during the existence of the marriage, no  
34 good reason could be found for protecting bad faith third parties with knowledge of the  
35 commission of fraud on the rights of the other spouse. For example, if A retitles community

1 property belonging partly to B solely in A’s name and sells it to C, C is protected from any claim  
2 by A with respect to the property because C gave value and provided C is in good faith and does  
3 not know that A improperly transferred property belonging to B. To the extent B has a  
4 cognizable claim under Section 7 of this act, it will be solely against A, not C. On the other  
5 hand, if A donated a community asset to C, C would not be protected by this section and B’s  
6 claim under Section 7 of this act could be cognizable against A or C or both.

7  
8 Second, this section also applies after the death of a decedent. Section 8 of this act  
9 provides relevant time periods within which a surviving spouse may assert rights against a  
10 personal representative of the decedent, as well as heirs or transferees of the decedent. Similarly,  
11 it also provides relevant time periods within which the heirs, beneficiaries, or creditors of the  
12 decedent may assert rights against the surviving spouse or the personal representative of the  
13 decedent. This section protects third persons who transact with those relevant parties in  
14 possession of apparent title to property, provided the third person gives value, is in good faith,  
15 and is without knowledge that the other party to the transaction is improperly exercising  
16 authority. For example, if after A’s death, A’s surviving spouse, B, sells Blackacre, which is  
17 titled solely in B’s name, to C, C will be protected from liability under this section, even if  
18 Blackacre was subject to this act because it was traceable to community property, provided, of  
19 course, C was in good faith and without knowledge that B was exceeding his authority.

20  
21 **SECTION 10. UNIFORMITY OF APPLICATION AND CONSTRUCTION.** In  
22 applying and construing this uniform act, consideration must be given to the need to promote  
23 uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that enact it.

24 **SECTION 11. RELATION TO ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES IN GLOBAL AND**  
25 **NATIONAL COMMERCE ACT.** This [act] modifies, limits, and supersedes the federal  
26 Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act, 15 U.S.C. Section 7001, et seq.,  
27 but does not modify, limit, or supersede Section 101(c) of that act, 15 U.S.C. Section 7001(c) or  
28 authorize electronic delivery of any of the notices described in Section 103(b) of that act, 15  
29 U.S.C. Section 7003(b).

30 **[SECTION 12. REPEAL.** The [Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at  
31 Death Act] is repealed.]

32 *Legislative Note: A state should repeal its existing Uniform Disposition of Community Property*  
33 *Rights at Death Act, or comparable legislation, to be replaced by this act.*

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**Comment**

This section repeals the adopting State’s present Uniform Disposition of Community Property Rights at Death Act. The effective date of this Section should be the same date selected by the state in Section 12 for the application of this act.

**SECTION 13. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This [act] takes effect . . . . This [act] applies to all judicial proceedings with respect to property to which this act applies commenced on or after [its effective date] regardless of the time of the death of the decedent, unless the court finds application of a particular provision of this [act] would substantially interfere with the effective conduct of the judicial proceedings or prejudice the rights of the parties, in which case the particular provision of this [act] does not apply and the superseded law applies.

**Reporter’s Note**

The amendment to this section is based generally upon UPC 8-101 and UTC 1106.