

AN ACT

relating to access to a residence or former residence to retrieve personal property, including access based on danger of family violence.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 24A, Property Code, is amended by amending Sections 24A.001 and 24A.002 and adding Section 24A.0021 to read as follows:

Sec. 24A.001. DEFINITIONS [~~DEFINITION~~]. In this chapter:

(1) "Electronic record" means a record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means.

(2) "Family violence" has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004, Family Code.

(3) "Peace[~~,"peace~~] officer" means a person listed under Article 2.12(1) or (2), Code of Criminal Procedure.

Sec. 24A.002. WRIT [~~ORDER~~] AUTHORIZING ENTRY AND PROPERTY RETRIEVAL; PEACE OFFICER TO ACCOMPANY. (a) If a person is unable to enter the person's residence or former residence to retrieve

personal property belonging to the person or the person's dependent because the current occupant is denying the person entry, the person may apply to the justice court for a writ [~~an order~~] authorizing the person to enter the residence accompanied by a peace officer to retrieve specific items of personal property.

(b) An application under Subsection (a) must:

(1) certify that the applicant is unable to enter the residence because the current occupant of the residence:

(A) has denied the applicant access to the residence; or

(B) poses a clear and present danger of family violence to the applicant or the applicant's dependent;

(2) certify that, to the best of the applicant's knowledge, the applicant is not:

(A) the subject of an active protective order under Title 4, Family Code, a magistrate's order for emergency protection under Article 17.292, Code of Criminal Procedure, or another court order prohibiting entry to the residence; or

(B) otherwise prohibited by law from entering the residence;

(3) allege that the applicant or the applicant's [~~minor~~] dependent requires personal items located in the residence that are

only of the following types:

- (A) medical records;
- (B) medicine and medical supplies;
- (C) clothing;
- (D) child-care items;
- (E) legal or financial documents;
- (F) checks or bank or credit cards in the name of

the applicant;

- (G) employment records; [~~or~~]
- (H) personal identification documents; or
- (I) copies of electronic records containing legal

or financial documents;

(4) describe with specificity the items that the applicant intends to retrieve;

(5) allege that the applicant or the applicant's dependent will suffer personal harm if the items listed in the application are not retrieved promptly; and

(6) include a lease or other documentary evidence that shows the applicant is currently or was formerly authorized to occupy the residence.

(c) Before the justice of the peace may issue a writ [~~an order~~] under this section, the applicant must execute a bond that:

(1) has two or more good and sufficient non-corporate sureties or one corporate surety authorized to issue bonds in this state;

(2) is payable to the occupant of the residence;

(3) is in an amount required by the justice; and

(4) is conditioned on the applicant paying all damages and costs adjudged against the applicant for wrongful property retrieval.

(d) The applicant shall deliver the bond to the justice of the peace issuing the writ [~~order~~] for the justice's approval. The bond shall be filed with the justice court.

(e) On sufficient evidence of urgency and potential harm to the health and safety of any person and after sufficient notice to the current occupant and an opportunity to be heard, the justice of the peace may grant the application under this section and issue a writ [~~an order~~] authorizing the applicant to enter the residence accompanied by a peace officer and retrieve the property listed in the application if the justice of the peace finds that:

(1) the applicant is unable to enter the residence because the current occupant of the residence has denied the applicant access to the residence to retrieve the applicant's personal property or the personal property of the applicant's

dependent;

(2) the applicant is not:

(A) the subject of an active protective order under Title 4, Family Code, a magistrate's order for emergency protection under Article 17.292, Code of Criminal Procedure, or another court order prohibiting entry to the residence; or

(B) otherwise prohibited by law from entering the residence;

(3) there is a risk of personal harm to the applicant or the applicant's dependent if the items listed in the application are not retrieved promptly;

(4) the applicant is currently or was formerly authorized to occupy the residence according to a lease or other documentary evidence; and

(5) the current occupant received notice of the application and was provided an opportunity to appear before the court to contest the application.

Sec. 24A.0021. TEMPORARY EX PARTE WRIT AUTHORIZING ENTRY AND PROPERTY RETRIEVAL. (a) A justice of the peace may issue a writ under Section 24A.002 without providing notice and hearing under Section 24A.002(e) (5) if the justice finds at a hearing on the application that:

(1) the conditions of Sections 24A.002(e)(1)-(4) are established;

(2) the current occupant poses a clear and present danger of family violence to the applicant or the applicant's dependent; and

(3) the personal harm to be suffered by the applicant or the applicant's dependent will be immediate and irreparable if the application is not granted.

(b) A justice of the peace issuing a writ under this section may waive the bond requirements under Sections 24A.002(c) and (d).

(c) The justice of the peace may recess a hearing under Subsection (a) to notify the current occupant by telephone that the current occupant may attend the hearing or bring to the court the personal property listed in the application. The justice of the peace shall reconvene the hearing before 5 p.m. that day regardless of whether the current occupant attends the hearing or brings the personal property to the court.

(d) A temporary ex parte writ issued under Subsection (a) must state the period, not to exceed five days, during which the writ is valid.

SECTION 2. Sections 24A.003(a), (b), and (c), Property Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) If the justice of the peace grants an application under Section 24A.002 or Section 24A.0021, a peace officer shall accompany and assist the applicant in making the authorized entry and retrieving the items of personal property listed in the application.

(b) If the current occupant of the residence is present at the time of the entry, the peace officer shall provide the occupant with a copy of the writ [~~court order~~] authorizing the entry and property retrieval.

(c) Before removing the property listed in the application from the residence, the applicant must submit all property retrieved to the peace officer assisting the applicant under this section to be inventoried. The peace officer shall create an inventory listing the items taken from the residence, provide a copy of the inventory to the applicant, provide a copy of the inventory to the current occupant or, if the current occupant is not present, leave the copy in a conspicuous place in the residence, and return the property to be removed from the residence to the applicant. The officer shall file the original inventory with the court that issued the writ [~~order~~] authorizing the entry and property retrieval.

SECTION 3. Section 24A.004, Property Code, is amended to read

as follows:

Sec. 24A.004. IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY. A landlord or a landlord's agent who permits or facilitates entry into a residence in accordance with a writ [~~court order~~] issued under this chapter is not civilly or criminally liable for an act or omission that arises in connection with permitting or facilitating the entry.

SECTION 4. Sections 24A.005(a) and (c), Property Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) A person commits an offense if the person interferes with a person or peace officer entering a residence and retrieving personal property under the authority of a writ [~~court order~~] issued under Section 24A.002 or 24A.0021.

(c) It is a defense to prosecution under this section that the actor did not receive a copy of the writ [~~court order~~] or other notice that the entry or property retrieval was authorized.

SECTION 5. Section 24A.006(a), Property Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The occupant of a residence that is the subject of a writ [~~court order~~] issued under Section 24A.002 or 24A.0021, not later than the 10th day after the date of the authorized entry, may file a complaint in the court that issued the writ [~~order~~] alleging that the applicant has appropriated property belonging to the occupant

or the occupant's dependent.

SECTION 6. Chapter 24A, Property Code, as amended by this Act, applies only to an application filed on or after the effective date of this Act. An application filed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the application was filed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 7. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

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President of the Senate

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Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 920 passed the Senate on April 3, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendment on May 25, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

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Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 920 passed the House, with amendment, on May 21, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 142, Nays 0, one present not voting.

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Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

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Date

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Governor