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CHAPTER 768 FLORIDA STATUTES
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TABLE OF CONTENTS | CHAPTER 768 PART I: GENERAL PROVISIONS

ID	Statute	Title	Page
X01	768.041	Release or Covenant Not to Sue	5
X02	768.042	Damages	6
X03	768.071	Limitation on Premises Liability	7
X04	768.080	Liability of Corporations Having Relief...	8
X05	768.090	Limitation of Liability for Employers of...	9
X06	768.095	Employer Immunity from Liability; Disclosure...	10
X07	768.096	Employer Presumption Against Negligent Hiring	11
X08	768.098	Limitation of Liability for Employee Leasing	13
X09	768.140	Suit by State; Waiver of Sovereign Immunity	15
X10	768.280	Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Tort Actions...	16
X11	768.295	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public...	30
X12	768.310	Contribution Among Tortfeasors	32



TABLE OF CONTENTS | CHAPTER 768 PART II: DAMAGES

ID	Statute	Title	Page
Y01	768.71	Applicability; Conflicts	36
Y02	768.72	Pleading in Civil Actions; Claim for Punitive...	37
Y03	768.725	Punitive Damages; Burden of Proof	39
Y04	768.73	Punitive Damages; Limitation	40
Y05	768.733	Bonds in Class Actions; Limitations	42
Y06	768.734	Capacity to Sue	43
Y07	768.735	Punitive Damages; Exceptions; Limitation	44
Y08	768.736	Punitive Damages; Exceptions for Intoxication	45
Y09	768.737	Punitive Damages; Application in Arbitration	46
Y10	768.74	Remittitur and Additur	47
Y11	768.76	Collateral Sources of Indemnity	49
Y12	768.77	Itemized Verdict	53
Y13	768.78	Alternative Methods of Payment of Damage Awards	54
Y14	768.79	Offer of Judgment and Demand for Judgment	59
Y15	768.81	Comparative Fault	62
-	n/a	Appendix	65



CHAPTER 768 FLORIDA STATUTES | FLORIDA

TITLE: XLV TORTS

CHAPTER: 768 NEGLIGENCE

PART: I GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTIONS: §768.041 through §768.31

NOTE: Pertinent Parts Only!!!



§768.041 FS | RELEASE OR COVENANT NOT TO SUE

(1) A release or covenant not to sue as to one tortfeasor for property damage to, personal injury of, or the wrongful death of any person shall not operate to release or discharge the liability of any other tortfeasor who may be liable for the same tort or death.

(2) At trial, if any defendant shows the court that the plaintiff, or any person lawfully on her or his behalf, has delivered a release or covenant not to sue to any person, firm, or corporation in partial satisfaction of the damages sued for, the court shall set off this amount from the amount of any judgment to which the plaintiff would be otherwise entitled at the time of rendering judgment and enter judgment accordingly.

(3) The fact of such a release or covenant not to sue, or that any defendant has been dismissed by order of the court shall not be made known to the jury.

History - (ss. 1, 2, 3, ch. 57-395; s. 45, ch. 67-254; s. 1158, ch. 97-102.)

Note - (Former s. 54.28.)



§768.042 FS | DAMAGES

In any action brought in the circuit court to recover damages for personal injury or wrongful death, the amount of general damages shall not be stated in the complaint, but the amount of special damages, if any, may be specifically pleaded and the requisite jurisdictional amount established for filing in any court of competent jurisdiction.

History - (ss. 8, 9, ch. 75-9; s. 161, ch. 2020-2.)



§768.0705 FS | LIMITATION ON PREMISES LIABILITY

The owner or operator of a convenience business that substantially implements the applicable security measures listed in ss. 812.173 and 812.174 shall gain a presumption against liability in connection with criminal acts that occur on the premises and that are committed by third parties who are not employees or agents of the owner or operator of the convenience business.

History - (s. 18, ch. 99-225.)



§768.08 FS | LIABILITY OF CORPORATIONS HAVING RELIEF DEPARTMENT FOR INJURY TO EMPLOYEES; CONTRACTS IN VIOLATION OF ACT VOID

Any person, association of persons, or corporation that has, or shall hereafter have, a relief department for the benefit of their or its employees, or which shall contribute any money or other thing of value to any relief society or association for the benefit of their or its employees, to which such employee may also contribute any money, or other thing of value, shall not be relieved of liability to such employee, or in case of her or his death to any person authorized by law to sue for such death, for the negligent injury or killing of such employee, because such employee may have been a member of or contributed to any such relief department, or received any benefits therefrom, but such employee, and in case of her or his death any person or persons authorized by law to sue for such death, shall be entitled to demand, sue for and recover any benefit that such employee may have been entitled to receive by reason of having been a member of or contributed to any such relief department, society or association, and such employee, and in case of her or his death any person authorized by law to sue for such death, shall be entitled to institute suit against any such person, association of persons or corporations, and to recover for any injury suffered by such employee and for the death of such employee, suffered through the negligence of such person, association of persons, or corporation, and any contract, stipulation or provision in violation of this section is declared to be null and void.

History - (s. 1, ch. 6520, 1913; RGS 4967; CGL 7054; s. 1162, ch. 97-102.)



§768.0895 FS | LIMITATION OF LIABILITY FOR EMPLOYERS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(1) An employer who employs a person with a developmental disability is not liable for the acts or omissions, negligent or intentional, of the employee if:

(a) The employee receives or has received supported employment services through a supported employment service provider; and

(b) The employer does not have actual notice of the actions of the employee which created unsafe conditions in the workplace.

(2) A supported employment service provider that provides or has provided supported employment services to a person with a developmental disability is not liable for the actions or conduct of the person which occur within the scope of the person's employment.

(3) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Developmental disability" has the same meaning as provided in s. 393.063.

(b) "Supported employment service provider" means a not-for-profit public or private organization or agency that provides services for persons in supported employment, as defined in s. 393.063.

History - (s. 1, ch. 2011-231.)



§768.095 FS | EMPLOYER IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY; DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION REGARDING FORMER OR CURRENT EMPLOYEES

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under chapter 760.

History - (s. 1, ch. 91-165; s. 17, ch. 99-225.)



§768.096 FS | EMPLOYER PRESUMPTION AGAINST NEGLIGENT HIRING

(1) In a civil action for the death of, or injury or damage to, a third person caused by the intentional tort of an employee, such employee's employer is presumed not to have been negligent in hiring such employee if, before hiring the employee, the employer conducted a background investigation of the prospective employee and the investigation did not reveal any information that reasonably demonstrated the unsuitability of the prospective employee for the particular work to be performed or for the employment in general. A background investigation under this section must include:

(a) Obtaining a criminal background investigation on the prospective employee under subsection (2);

(b) Making a reasonable effort to contact references and former employers of the prospective employee concerning the suitability of the prospective employee for employment;

(c) Requiring the prospective employee to complete a job application form that includes questions concerning whether he or she has ever been convicted of a crime, including details concerning the type of crime, the date of conviction and the penalty imposed, and whether the prospective employee has ever been a defendant in a civil action for intentional tort, including the nature of the intentional tort and the disposition of the action;

(d) Obtaining, with written authorization from the prospective employee, a check of the driver license record of the prospective employee if such a check is relevant to the work the employee will be performing and if the record can reasonably be obtained; or

(e) Interviewing the prospective employee.

(2) To satisfy the criminal-background-investigation requirement of this section, an employer must request and obtain from the Department of Law Enforcement a check of the information as reported and reflected in the Florida Crime Information Center system as of the date of the request.



(3) The election by an employer not to conduct the investigation specified in subsection (1) does not raise any presumption that the employer failed to use reasonable care in hiring an employee.

History - (s. 16, ch. 99-225.)



§768.098 FS | LIMITATION OF LIABILITY FOR EMPLOYEE LEASING

(1) An employer in a joint employment relationship pursuant to s. 468.520 shall not be liable for the tortious actions of another employer in that relationship, or for the tortious actions of any jointly employed employee under that relationship, provided that:

(a) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not authorize or direct the tortious action;

(b) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not have actual knowledge of the tortious conduct and fail to take appropriate action;

(c) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not have actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act nor actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which the tortious conduct arose or at which and from which a jointly employed employee worked, and that said control was assigned to the other employer under the contract;

(d) The employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section is expressly absolved in the written contract forming the joint employment relationship of control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act, and actual control over the portion of the job site at which or from which the tortious conduct arose or at which and from which the jointly employed employee worked, and that said control was assigned to the other employer under the contract; and



(e) Complaints, allegations, or incidents of any tortious misconduct or workplace safety violations, regardless of the source, are required to be reported to the employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section by all other joint employers under the written contract forming the joint employment relationship, and that the employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section did not fail to take appropriate action as a result of receiving any such report related to a jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act.

(2) An employer seeking to avoid liability pursuant to this section shall not be presumed to have actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee who has committed a tortious act, nor actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which that employee worked, based solely upon the fact that the employee at issue is a leased employee.

(3) This section shall not alter any responsibilities of the joint employer who has actual control over the day-to-day job duties of the jointly employed employee and who has actual control over the portion of a job site at which or from which the employee is employed, which arise from s. 768.096.

History - (s. 29, ch. 99-225.)



§768.14 FS | SUIT BY STATE; WAIVER OF SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY

Suit by the state or any of its agencies or subdivisions to recover damages in tort shall constitute a waiver of sovereign immunity from liability and suit for damages in tort to the extent of permitting the defendant to counterclaim for damages resulting from the same transaction or occurrence.

History - (s. 1, ch. 67-2204.)



§768.28 FS | WAIVER OF SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY IN TORT ACTIONS; RECOVERY LIMITS; LIMITATION ON ATTORNEY FEES; STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS; EXCLUSIONS; INDEMNIFICATION; RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

(1) In accordance with s. 13, Art. X of the State Constitution, the state, for itself and for its agencies or subdivisions, hereby waives sovereign immunity for liability for torts, but only to the extent specified in this act. Actions at law against the state or any of its agencies or subdivisions to recover damages in tort for money damages against the state or its agencies or subdivisions for injury or loss of property, personal injury, or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the agency or subdivision while acting within the scope of the employee's office or employment under circumstances in which the state or such agency or subdivision, if a private person, would be liable to the claimant, in accordance with the general laws of this state, may be prosecuted subject to the limitations specified in this act. Any such action may be brought in the county where the property in litigation is located or, if the affected agency or subdivision has an office in such county for the transaction of its customary business, where the cause of action accrued. However, any such action against a state university board of trustees shall be brought in the county in which that university's main campus is located or in the county in which the cause of action accrued if the university maintains therein a substantial presence for the transaction of its customary business.

(2) As used in this act, "state agencies or subdivisions" include the executive departments, the Legislature, the judicial branch (including public defenders), and the independent establishments of the state, including state university boards of trustees; counties and municipalities; and corporations primarily acting as instrumentalities or agencies of the state, counties, or municipalities, including the **Florida Space Authority**.

(3) Except for a municipality and the **Florida Space Authority**, the affected agency or subdivision may, at its discretion, request the assistance of the **Department of Financial Services** in the consideration, adjustment, and settlement of any claim under this act.



(4) Subject to the provisions of this section, any state agency or subdivision shall have the right to appeal any award, compromise, settlement, or determination to the court of appropriate jurisdiction.

(5) The state and its agencies and subdivisions shall be liable for tort claims in the same manner and to the same extent as a private individual under like circumstances, but liability shall not include punitive damages or interest for the period before judgment. Neither the state nor its agencies or subdivisions shall be liable to pay a claim or a judgment by any one person which exceeds the sum of \$200,000 or any claim or judgment, or portions thereof, which, when totaled with all other claims or judgments paid by the state or its agencies or subdivisions arising out of the same incident or occurrence, exceeds the sum of \$300,000. However, a judgment or judgments may be claimed and rendered in excess of these amounts and may be settled and paid pursuant to this act up to \$200,000 or \$300,000, as the case may be; and that portion of the judgment that exceeds these amounts may be reported to the Legislature, but may be paid in part or in whole only by further act of the Legislature. Notwithstanding the limited waiver of sovereign immunity provided herein, the state or an agency or subdivision thereof may agree, within the limits of insurance coverage provided, to settle a claim made or a judgment rendered against it without further action by the Legislature, but the state or agency or subdivision thereof shall not be deemed to have waived any defense of sovereign immunity or to have increased the limits of its liability as a result of its obtaining insurance coverage for tortious acts in excess of the \$200,000 or \$300,000 waiver provided above. The limitations of liability set forth in this subsection shall apply to the state and its agencies and subdivisions whether or not the state or its agencies or subdivisions possessed sovereign immunity before July 1, 1974.

(6)

(a) An action may not be instituted on a claim against the state or one of its agencies or subdivisions unless the claimant presents the claim in writing to the appropriate agency, and also, except as to any claim against a municipality, county, or the **Florida Space Authority**, presents such claim in writing to the



Department of Financial Services, within 3 years after such claim accrues and the **Department of Financial Services** or the appropriate agency denies the claim in writing; except that, if:

1. Such claim is for contribution pursuant to s. 768.31, it must be so presented within 6 months after the judgment against the tortfeasor seeking contribution has become final by lapse of time for appeal or after appellate review or, if there is no such judgment, within 6 months after the tortfeasor seeking contribution has either discharged the common liability by payment or agreed, while the action is pending against her or him, to discharge the common liability; or
2. Such action is for wrongful death, the claimant must present the claim in writing to the **Department of Financial Services** within 2 years after the claim accrues.

(b) For purposes of this section, the requirements of notice to the agency and denial of the claim pursuant to paragraph (a) are conditions precedent to maintaining an action but shall not be deemed to be elements of the cause of action and shall not affect the date on which the cause of action accrues.

(c) The claimant shall also provide to the agency the claimant's date and place of birth and social security number if the claimant is an individual, or a federal identification number if the claimant is not an individual. The claimant shall also state the case style, tribunal, the nature and amount of all adjudicated penalties, fines, fees, victim restitution fund, and other judgments in excess of \$200, whether imposed by a civil, criminal, or administrative tribunal, owed by the claimant to the state, its agency, officer or subdivision. If there exists no prior adjudicated unpaid claim in excess of \$200, the claimant shall so state.

(d) For purposes of this section, complete, accurate, and timely compliance with the requirements of paragraph (c) shall occur prior to settlement payment, close of discovery or commencement of trial, whichever is sooner;



provided the ability to plead setoff is not precluded by the delay. This setoff shall apply only against that part of the settlement or judgment payable to the claimant, minus claimant's reasonable attorney's fees and costs. Incomplete or inaccurate disclosure of unpaid adjudicated claims due the state, its agency, officer, or subdivision, may be excused by the court upon a showing by the preponderance of the evidence of the claimant's lack of knowledge of an adjudicated claim and reasonable inquiry by, or on behalf of, the claimant to obtain the information from public records. Unless the appropriate agency had actual notice of the information required to be disclosed by paragraph (c) in time to assert a setoff, an unexcused failure to disclose shall, upon hearing and order of court, cause the claimant to be liable for double the original undisclosed judgment and, upon further motion, the court shall enter judgment for the agency in that amount. Except as provided otherwise in this subsection, the failure of the **Department of Financial Services** or the appropriate agency to make final disposition of a claim within 6 months after it is filed shall be deemed a final denial of the claim for purposes of this section. For purposes of this subsection, in medical malpractice actions and in wrongful death actions, the failure of the **Department of Financial Services** or the appropriate agency to make final disposition of a claim within 90 days after it is filed shall be deemed a final denial of the claim. The statute of limitations for medical malpractice actions and wrongful death actions is tolled for the period of time taken by the **Department of Financial Services** or the appropriate agency to deny the claim. The provisions of this subsection do not apply to such claims as may be asserted by counterclaim pursuant to s. 768.14.

(7) In actions brought pursuant to this section, process shall be served upon the head of the agency concerned and also, except as to a defendant municipality, county, or the **Florida Space Authority**, upon the **Department of Financial Services**; and the department or the agency concerned shall have 30 days within which to plead thereto.

(8) No attorney may charge, demand, receive, or collect, for services rendered, fees in excess of 25 percent of any judgment or settlement.



(9)

(a) No officer, employee, or agent of the state or of any of its subdivisions shall be held personally liable in tort or named as a party defendant in any action for any injury or damage suffered as a result of any act, event, or omission of action in the scope of her or his employment or function, unless such officer, employee, or agent acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose or in a manner exhibiting wanton and willful disregard of human rights, safety, or property. However, such officer, employee, or agent shall be considered an adverse witness in a tort action for any injury or damage suffered as a result of any act, event, or omission of action in the scope of her or his employment or function. The exclusive remedy for injury or damage suffered as a result of an act, event, or omission of an officer, employee, or agent of the state or any of its subdivisions or constitutional officers shall be by action against the governmental entity, or the head of such entity in her or his official capacity, or the constitutional officer of which the officer, employee, or agent is an employee, unless such act or omission was committed in bad faith or with malicious purpose or in a manner exhibiting wanton and willful disregard of human rights, safety, or property. The state or its subdivisions shall not be liable in tort for the acts or omissions of an officer, employee, or agent committed while acting outside the course and scope of her or his employment or committed in bad faith or with malicious purpose or in a manner exhibiting wanton and willful disregard of human rights, safety, or property.

(b) As used in this subsection, the term:

1. "Employee" includes any volunteer firefighter.
2. "Officer, employee, or agent" includes, but is not limited to, any health care provider when providing services pursuant to s. 766.1115; any nonprofit independent college or university located and chartered in this state which owns or operates an accredited medical school, and its employees or agents, when providing patient services pursuant to paragraph (10)(f); and any public defender or her



or his employee or agent, including, among others, an assistant public defender and an investigator.

(c) For purposes of the waiver of sovereign immunity only, a member of the **Florida National Guard** is not acting within the scope of state employment when performing duty under the provisions of Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code or other applicable federal law; and neither the state nor any individual may be named in any action under this chapter arising from the performance of such federal duty.

(d) The employing agency of a law enforcement officer as defined in s. 943.10 is not liable for injury, death, or property damage effected or caused by a person fleeing from a law enforcement officer in a motor vehicle if:

1. The pursuit is conducted in a manner that does not involve conduct by the officer which is so reckless or wanting in care as to constitute disregard of human life, human rights, safety, or the property of another;

2. At the time the law enforcement officer initiates the pursuit, the officer reasonably believes that the person fleeing has committed a forcible felony as defined in s. 776.08; and

3. The pursuit is conducted by the officer pursuant to a written policy governing high-speed pursuit adopted by the employing agency. The policy must contain specific procedures concerning the proper method to initiate and terminate high-speed pursuit. The law enforcement officer must have received instructional training from the employing agency on the written policy governing high-speed pursuit.

(10)

(a) Health care providers or vendors, or any of their employees or agents, that have contractually agreed to act as agents of the **Department of Corrections** to provide health care services to inmates of the state correctional system shall be considered agents of the State of Florida, **Department of Corrections**, for the purposes of this section, while acting within the scope



of and pursuant to guidelines established in said contract or by rule. The contracts shall provide for the indemnification of the state by the agent for any liabilities incurred up to the limits set out in this chapter.

(b) This subsection shall not be construed as designating persons providing contracted health care services to inmates as employees or agents of the state for the purposes of chapter 440.

(c) For purposes of this section, regional poison control centers created in accordance with s. 395.1027 and coordinated and supervised under the Division of Children's Medical Services Prevention and Intervention of the Department of Health, or any of their employees or agents, shall be considered agents of the State of Florida, Department of Health. Any contracts with poison control centers must provide, to the extent permitted by law, for the indemnification of the state by the agency for any liabilities incurred up to the limits set out in this chapter.

(d) For the purposes of this section, operators, dispatchers, and providers of security for rail services and rail facility maintenance providers in the South Florida Rail Corridor, or any of their employees or agents, performing such services under contract with and on behalf of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority or the Department of Transportation shall be considered agents of the state while acting within the scope of and pursuant to guidelines established in said contract or by rule.

(e) For purposes of this section, a professional firm that provides monitoring and inspection services of the work required for state roadway, bridge, or other transportation facility construction projects, or any of the firm's employees performing such services, shall be considered agents of the Department of Transportation while acting within the scope of the firm's contract with the Department of Transportation to ensure that the project is constructed in conformity with the project's plans, specifications, and contract provisions. Any contract between the professional firm and the state, to the extent permitted by law, shall provide for the



indemnification of the department for any liability, including reasonable attorney's fees, incurred up to the limits set out in this chapter to the extent caused by the negligence of the firm or its employees. This paragraph shall not be construed as designating persons who provide monitoring and inspection services as employees or agents of the state for purposes of chapter 440. This paragraph is not applicable to the professional firm or its employees if involved in an accident while operating a motor vehicle. This paragraph is not applicable to a firm engaged by the Department of Transportation for the design or construction of a state roadway, bridge, or other transportation facility construction project or to its employees, agents, or subcontractors.

(f) For purposes of this section, any nonprofit independent college or university located and chartered in this state which owns or operates an accredited medical school, or any of its employees or agents, and which has agreed in an affiliation agreement or other contract to provide, or permit its employees or agents to provide, patient services as agents of a teaching hospital, is considered an agent of the teaching hospital while acting within the scope of and pursuant to guidelines established in the affiliation agreement or other contract. To the extent allowed by law, the contract must provide for the indemnification of the teaching hospital, up to the limits set out in this chapter, by the agent for any liability incurred which was caused by the negligence of the college or university or its employees or agents. The contract must also provide that those limited portions of the college, university, or medical school which are directly providing services pursuant to the contract and which are considered an agent of the teaching hospital for purposes of this section are deemed to be acting on behalf of a public agency as defined in s. 119.011(2).

1. For purposes of this paragraph, the term:

a. "Employee or agent" means an officer, employee, agent, or servant of a nonprofit independent college or university located and chartered in this state which owns or operates



an accredited medical school, including, but not limited to, the faculty of the medical school, any health care practitioner or licensee as defined in s. 456.001 for which the college or university is vicariously liable, and the staff or administrators of the medical school.

b. "Patient services" mean:

(I) Comprehensive health care services as defined in s. 641.19, including any related administrative service, provided to patients in a teaching hospital;

(II) Training and supervision of interns, residents, and fellows providing patient services in a teaching hospital; or

(III) Training and supervision of medical students in a teaching hospital.

c. "Teaching hospital" means a teaching hospital as defined in s. 408.07 which is owned or operated by the state, a county or municipality, a public health trust, a special taxing district, a governmental entity having health care responsibilities, or a not-for-profit entity that operates such facility as an agent of the state, or a political subdivision of the state, under a lease or other contract.

2. The teaching hospital or the medical school, or its employees or agents, must provide notice to each patient, or the patient's legal representative, that the college or university that owns or operates the medical school and the employees or agents of that college or university are acting as agents of the teaching hospital and that the exclusive remedy for injury or damage suffered as the result of any act or omission of the teaching hospital, the college or university that owns or operates the medical school, or the employees or agents of the college or university, while acting within the scope of duties pursuant to



the affiliation agreement or other contract with a teaching hospital, is by commencement of an action pursuant to the provisions of this section. This notice requirement may be met by posting the notice in a place conspicuous to all persons.

3. This paragraph does not designate any employee providing contracted patient services in a teaching hospital as an employee or agent of the state for purposes of chapter 440.

(g) For the purposes of this section, the executive director of the **Board of Nursing**, when serving as the state administrator of the Nurse Licensure Compact pursuant to s. 464.0095, and any administrator, officer, executive director, employee, or representative of the Interstate Commission of Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators, when acting within the scope of their employment, duties, or responsibilities in this state, are considered agents of the state. The commission shall pay any claims or judgments pursuant to this section and may maintain insurance coverage to pay any such claims or judgments.

(11)

(a) Providers or vendors, or any of their employees or agents, that have contractually agreed to act on behalf of the state as agents of the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide services to children in need of services, families in need of services, or juvenile offenders are, solely with respect to such services, agents of the state for purposes of this section while acting within the scope of and pursuant to guidelines established in the contract or by rule. A contract must provide for the indemnification of the state by the agent for any liabilities incurred up to the limits set out in this chapter.

(b) This subsection does not designate a person who provides contracted services to juvenile offenders as an employee or agent of the state for purposes of chapter 440.

(12)



(a) A health care practitioner, as defined in s. 456.001(4), who has contractually agreed to act as an agent of a state university board of trustees to provide medical services to a student athlete for participation in or as a result of intercollegiate athletics, to include team practices, training, and competitions, shall be considered an agent of the respective state university board of trustees, for the purposes of this section, while acting within the scope of and pursuant to guidelines established in that contract. The contracts shall provide for the indemnification of the state by the agent for any liabilities incurred up to the limits set out in this chapter.

(b) This subsection shall not be construed as designating persons providing contracted health care services to athletes as employees or agents of a state university board of trustees for the purposes of chapter 440.

(13) Laws allowing the state or its agencies or subdivisions to buy insurance are still in force and effect and are not restricted in any way by the terms of this act.

(14) Every claim against the state or one of its agencies or subdivisions for damages for a negligent or wrongful act or omission pursuant to this section shall be forever barred unless the civil action is commenced by filing a complaint in the court of appropriate jurisdiction within 4 years after such claim accrues; except that an action for contribution must be commenced within the limitations provided in s. 768.31(4), and an action for damages arising from medical malpractice or wrongful death must be commenced within the limitations for such actions in s. 95.11(4).

(15) No action may be brought against the state or any of its agencies or subdivisions by anyone who unlawfully participates in a riot, unlawful assembly, public demonstration, mob violence, or civil disobedience if the claim arises out of such riot, unlawful assembly, public demonstration, mob violence, or civil disobedience. Nothing in this act shall abridge traditional immunities pertaining to statements made in court.

(16)



(a) The state and its agencies and subdivisions are authorized to be self-insured, to enter into risk management programs, or to purchase liability insurance for whatever coverage they may choose, or to have any combination thereof, in anticipation of any claim, judgment, and claims bill which they may be liable to pay pursuant to this section. Agencies or subdivisions, and sheriffs, that are subject to homogeneous risks may purchase insurance jointly or may join together as self-insurers to provide other means of protection against tort claims, any charter provisions or laws to the contrary notwithstanding.

(b) Claims files maintained by any risk management program administered by the state, its agencies, and its subdivisions are confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution until termination of all litigation and settlement of all claims arising out of the same incident, although portions of the claims files may remain exempt, as otherwise provided by law. Claims files records may be released to other governmental agencies upon written request and demonstration of need; such records held by the receiving agency remain confidential and exempt as provided for in this paragraph.

(c) Portions of meetings and proceedings conducted pursuant to any risk management program administered by the state, its agencies, or its subdivisions, which relate solely to the evaluation of claims filed with the risk management program or which relate solely to offers of compromise of claims filed with the risk management program are exempt from the provisions of s. 286.011 and s. 24(b), Art. I of the State Constitution. Until termination of all litigation and settlement of all claims arising out of the same incident, persons privy to discussions pertinent to the evaluation of a filed claim shall not be subject to subpoena in any administrative or civil proceeding with regard to the content of those discussions.

(d) Minutes of the meetings and proceedings of any risk management program administered by the state, its agencies, or its subdivisions, which relate solely to

the evaluation of claims filed with the risk management program or which relate solely to offers of compromise of claims filed with the risk management program are exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1) and s. 24(a), Art. I of the State Constitution until termination of all litigation and settlement of all claims arising out of the same incident.

(17) This section, as amended by chapter 81-317, Laws of Florida, shall apply only to causes of actions which accrue on or after October 1, 1981.

(18) No provision of this section, or of any other section of the Florida Statutes, whether read separately or in conjunction with any other provision, shall be construed to waive the immunity of the state or any of its agencies from suit in federal court, as such immunity is guaranteed by the Eleventh Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, unless such waiver is explicitly and definitely stated to be a waiver of the immunity of the state and its agencies from suit in federal court. This subsection shall not be construed to mean that the state has at any time previously waived, by implication, its immunity, or that of any of its agencies, from suit in federal court through any statute in existence prior to June 24, 1984.

(19) Neither the state nor any agency or subdivision of the state waives any defense of sovereign immunity, or increases the limits of its liability, upon entering into a contractual relationship with another agency or subdivision of the state. Such a contract must not contain any provision that requires one party to indemnify or insure the other party for the other party's negligence or to assume any liability for the other party's negligence. This does not preclude a party from requiring a nongovernmental entity to provide such indemnification or insurance. The restrictions of this subsection do not prevent a regional water supply authority from indemnifying and assuming the liabilities of its member governments for obligations arising from past acts or omissions at or with property acquired from a member government by the authority and arising from the acts or omissions of the authority in performing activities contemplated by an interlocal agreement. Such indemnification may not be considered to increase or otherwise waive the

limits of liability to third-party claimants established by this section.

(20) Every municipality, and any agency thereof, is authorized to undertake to indemnify those employees that are exposed to personal liability pursuant to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, 42 U.S.C.A. ss. 7401 et seq., and all rules and regulations adopted to implement that act, for acts performed within the course and scope of their employment with the municipality or its agency, including but not limited to indemnification pertaining to the holding, transfer, or disposition of allowances allocated to the municipality's or its agency's electric generating units, and the monitoring, submission, certification, and compliance with permits, permit applications, records, compliance plans, and reports for those units, when such acts are performed within the course and scope of their employment with the municipality or its agency. The authority to indemnify under this section covers every act by an employee when such act is performed within the course and scope of her or his employment with the municipality or its agency, but does not cover any act of willful misconduct or any intentional or knowing violation of any law by the employee. The authority to indemnify under this section includes, but is not limited to, the authority to pay any fine and provide legal representation in any action.

History - (s. 1, ch. 73-313; s. 1, ch. 74-235; ss. 1, 2, 3, ch. 77-86; s. 9, ch. 79-139; s. 1, ch. 79-253; s. 284, ch. 79-400; s. 1, ch. 80-271; ss. 1, 2, ch. 81-317; s. 1, ch. 83-44; s. 1, ch. 83-257; s. 1, ch. 84-29; s. 1, ch. 84-335; s. 21, ch. 86-183; s. 1, ch. 86-184; s. 3, ch. 87-134; s. 2, ch. 88-173; ss. 55, 61, ch. 89-300; s. 92, ch. 89-360; s. 8, ch. 90-192; s. 3, ch. 91-209; s. 112, ch. 92-33; ss. 2, 11, ch. 92-278; s. 1, ch. 93-89; s. 34, ch. 93-129; s. 1, ch. 94-76; s. 2, ch. 94-147; s. 70, ch. 94-209; s. 21, ch. 94-321; s. 428, ch. 96-406; s. 34, ch. 97-93; s. 1809, ch. 97-102; s. 4, ch. 98-402; s. 289, ch. 99-8; s. 9, ch. 2000-155; s. 97, ch. 2002-20; s. 24, ch. 2002-183; s. 2, ch. 2002-401; s. 9, ch. 2003-159; s. 1903, ch. 2003-261; s. 1, ch. 2003-290; s. 67, ch. 2003-416; s. 1, ch. 2006-234; s. 1, ch. 2010-26; s. 1, ch. 2011-113; s. 3, ch. 2011-219; s. 126, ch. 2012-184; s. 12, ch. 2016-139; s. 33, ch. 2017-175.)

§768.295 FS | STRATEGIC LAWSUITS AGAINST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SLAPP) PROHIBITED

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature to protect the right in Florida to exercise the rights of free speech in connection with public issues, and the rights to peacefully assemble, instruct representatives, and petition for redress of grievances before the various governmental entities of this state as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and s. 5, Art. I of the State Constitution. It is the public policy of this state that a person or governmental entity not engage in **SLAPP** suits because such actions are inconsistent with the right of persons to exercise such constitutional rights of free speech in connection with public issues. Therefore, the Legislature finds and declares that prohibiting such lawsuits as herein described will preserve this fundamental state policy, preserve the constitutional rights of persons in Florida, and assure the continuation of representative government in this state. It is the intent of the Legislature that such lawsuits be expeditiously disposed of by the courts.

(2) As used in this section, the phrase or term:

(a) "Free speech in connection with public issues" means any written or oral statement that is protected under applicable law and is made before a governmental entity in connection with an issue under consideration or review by a governmental entity, or is made in or in connection with a play, movie, television program, radio broadcast, audiovisual work, book, magazine article, musical work, news report, or other similar work.

(b) "Governmental entity" or "government entity" means the state, including the executive, legislative, and the judicial branches of government and the independent establishments of the state, counties, municipalities, corporations primarily acting as instrumentalities of the state, counties, or municipalities, districts, authorities, boards, commissions, or any agencies thereof.

(3) A person or governmental entity in this state may not file or cause to be filed, through its employees or agents, any lawsuit, cause of action, claim, cross-claim, or counterclaim against another person or entity without merit



and primarily because such person or entity has exercised the constitutional right of free speech in connection with a public issue, or right to peacefully assemble, to instruct representatives of government, or to petition for redress of grievances before the various governmental entities of this state, as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and s. 5, Art. I of the State Constitution.

(4) A person or entity sued by a governmental entity or another person in violation of this section has a right to an expeditious resolution of a claim that the suit is in violation of this section. A person or entity may move the court for an order dismissing the action or granting final judgment in favor of that person or entity. The person or entity may file a motion for summary judgment, together with supplemental affidavits, seeking a determination that the claimant's or governmental entity's lawsuit has been brought in violation of this section. The claimant or governmental entity shall thereafter file a response and any supplemental affidavits. As soon as practicable, the court shall set a hearing on the motion, which shall be held at the earliest possible time after the filing of the claimant's or governmental entity's response. The court may award, subject to the limitations in s. 768.28, the party sued by a governmental entity actual damages arising from a governmental entity's violation of this section. The court shall award the prevailing party reasonable attorney fees and costs incurred in connection with a claim that an action was filed in violation of this section.

(5) In any case filed by a governmental entity which is found by a court to be in violation of this section, the governmental entity shall report such finding and provide a copy of the court's order to the Attorney General no later than 30 days after such order is final. The Attorney General shall report any violation of this section by a governmental entity to the Cabinet, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. A copy of such report shall be provided to the affected governmental entity.

History - (s. 1, ch. 2000-174; s. 1, ch. 2015-70.)



§768.31 FS | CONTRIBUTION AMONG TORTFEASORS

(1) SHORT TITLE. — This act shall be cited as the “**Uniform Contribution Among Tortfeasors Act.**”

(2) RIGHT TO CONTRIBUTION. —

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this act, when two or more persons become jointly or severally liable in tort for the same injury to person or property, or for the same wrongful death, there is a right of contribution among them even though judgment has not been recovered against all or any of them.

(b) The right of contribution exists only in favor of a tortfeasor who has paid more than her or his pro rata share of the common liability, and the tortfeasor’s total recovery is limited to the amount paid by her or him in excess of her or his pro rata share. No tortfeasor is compelled to make contribution beyond her or his own pro rata share of the entire liability.

(c) There is no right of contribution in favor of any tortfeasor who has intentionally (willfully or wantonly) caused or contributed to the injury or wrongful death.

(d) A tortfeasor who enters into a settlement with a claimant is not entitled to recover contribution from another tortfeasor whose liability for the injury or wrongful death is not extinguished by the settlement or in respect to any amount paid in a settlement which is in excess of what was reasonable.

(e) A liability insurer who by payment has discharged in full or in part the liability of a tortfeasor and has thereby discharged in full its obligation as insurer is subrogated to the tortfeasor’s right of contribution to the extent of the amount it has paid in excess of the tortfeasor’s pro rata share of the common liability. This provision does not limit or impair any right of subrogation arising from any other relationship.

(f) This act does not impair any right of indemnity under existing law. When one tortfeasor is entitled to indemnity from another, the right of the indemnity obligee is for indemnity and not contribution, and the indemnity obligor is not entitled to contribution from

the obligee for any portion of her or his indemnity obligation.

(g) This act shall not apply to breaches of trust or of other fiduciary obligation.

(3) PRO RATA SHARES. – In determining the pro rata shares of tortfeasors in the entire liability:

(a) Their relative degrees of fault shall be the basis for allocation of liability.

(b) If equity requires, the collective liability of some as a group shall constitute a single share.

(c) Principles of equity applicable to contribution generally shall apply.

(4) ENFORCEMENT. –

(a) Whether or not judgment has been entered in an action against two or more tortfeasors for the same injury or wrongful death, contribution may be enforced by separate action.

(b) When a judgment has been entered in an action against two or more tortfeasors for the same injury or wrongful death, contribution may be enforced in that action by judgment in favor of one against other judgment defendants, by motion upon notice to all parties to the action.

(c) If there is a judgment for the injury or wrongful death against the tortfeasor seeking contribution, any separate action by her or him to enforce contribution must be commenced within 1 year after the judgment has become final by lapse of time for appeal or after appellate review.

(d) If there is no judgment for the injury or wrongful death against the tortfeasor seeking contribution, the tortfeasor's right of contribution is barred unless she or he has either:

1. Discharged by payment the common liability within the statute of limitations period applicable to claimant's right of action against her or him and has commenced her or his action for contribution within 1 year after payment, or



2. Agreed, while action is pending against her or him, to discharge the common liability and has within 1 year after the agreement paid the liability and commenced her or his action for contribution.

(e) The recovery of a judgment for an injury or wrongful death against one tortfeasor does not of itself discharge the other tortfeasors from liability for the injury or wrongful death unless the judgment is satisfied. The satisfaction of the judgment does not impair any right of contribution.

(f) The judgment of the court in determining the liability of the several defendants to the claimant for an injury or wrongful death shall be binding as among such defendants in determining their right to contribution.

(5) RELEASE OR COVENANT NOT TO SUE. – When a release or a covenant not to sue or not to enforce judgment is given in good faith to one of two or more persons liable in tort for the same injury or the same wrongful death:

(a) It does not discharge any of the other tortfeasors from liability for the injury or wrongful death unless its terms so provide, but it reduces the claim against the others to the extent of any amount stipulated by the release or the covenant, or in the amount of the consideration paid for it, whichever is the greater; and,

(b) It discharges the tortfeasor to whom it is given from all liability for contribution to any other tortfeasor.

(6) UNIFORMITY OF INTERPRETATION. – This act shall be so interpreted and construed as to effectuate its general purpose to make uniform the law of those states that enact it.

(7) PENDING CAUSES OF ACTION. – This act shall apply to all causes of action pending on June 12, 1975, wherein the rights of contribution among joint tortfeasors is involved and to cases thereafter filed.

History - (ss. 1, 4, ch. 75-108; s. 1, ch. 76-186; s. 1171, ch. 97-102.)



CHAPTER 768 FLORIDA STATUTES | FLORIDA

TITLE: XLV TORTS

CHAPTER: 768 NEGLIGENCE

PART: II DAMAGES

SECTIONS: §768.71 through §768.81

NOTE: Entire Subpart!



§768.71 FS | APPLICABILITY; CONFLICTS

(1) Except as otherwise specifically provided, this part applies to any action for damages, whether in tort or in contract.

(2) This part applies only to causes of action arising on or after July 1, 1986, and does not apply to any cause of action arising before that date.

(3) If a provision of this part is in conflict with any other provision of the Florida Statutes, such other provision shall apply.

History - (s. 50, ch. 86-160.)



§768.72 FS | PLEADING IN CIVIL ACTIONS; CLAIM FOR PUNITIVE DAMAGES

(1) In any civil action, no claim for punitive damages shall be permitted unless there is a reasonable showing by evidence in the record or proffered by the claimant which would provide a reasonable basis for recovery of such damages. The claimant may move to amend her or his complaint to assert a claim for punitive damages as allowed by the rules of civil procedure. The rules of civil procedure shall be liberally construed so as to allow the claimant discovery of evidence which appears reasonably calculated to lead to admissible evidence on the issue of punitive damages. No discovery of financial worth shall proceed until after the pleading concerning punitive damages is permitted.

(2) A defendant may be held liable for punitive damages only if the trier of fact, based on clear and convincing evidence, finds that the defendant was personally guilty of intentional misconduct or gross negligence. As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Intentional misconduct" means that the defendant had actual knowledge of the wrongfulness of the conduct and the high probability that injury or damage to the claimant would result and, despite that knowledge, intentionally pursued that course of conduct, resulting in injury or damage.

(b) "Gross negligence" means that the defendant's conduct was so reckless or wanting in care that it constituted a conscious disregard or indifference to the life, safety, or rights of persons exposed to such conduct.

(3) In the case of an employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity, punitive damages may be imposed for the conduct of an employee or agent only if the conduct of the employee or agent meets the criteria specified in subsection (2) and:

(a) The employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity actively and knowingly participated in such conduct;



(b) The officers, directors, or managers of the employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity knowingly condoned, ratified, or consented to such conduct; or

(c) The employer, principal, corporation, or other legal entity engaged in conduct that constituted gross negligence and that contributed to the loss, damages, or injury suffered by the claimant.

(4) The provisions of this section shall be applied to all causes of action arising after the effective date of this act.

History - (s. 51, ch. 86-160; s. 1172, ch. 97-102; s. 22, ch. 99-225.)

§768.725 FS | PUNITIVE DAMAGES; BURDEN OF PROOF

In all civil actions, the plaintiff must establish at trial, by clear and convincing evidence, its entitlement to an award of punitive damages. The "greater weight of the evidence" burden of proof applies to a determination of the amount of damages.

History - (s. 21, ch. 99-225.)



§768.73 FS | PUNITIVE DAMAGES; LIMITATION

(1)

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), an award of punitive damages may not exceed the greater of:

1. Three times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each claimant entitled thereto, consistent with the remaining provisions of this section; or
2. The sum of \$500,000.

(b) Where the fact finder determines that the wrongful conduct proven under this section was motivated solely by unreasonable financial gain and determines that the unreasonably dangerous nature of the conduct, together with the high likelihood of injury resulting from the conduct, was actually known by the managing agent, director, officer, or other person responsible for making policy decisions on behalf of the defendant, it may award an amount of punitive damages not to exceed the greater of:

1. Four times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each claimant entitled thereto, consistent with the remaining provisions of this section; or
2. The sum of \$2 million.

(c) Where the fact finder determines that at the time of injury the defendant had a specific intent to harm the claimant and determines that the defendant's conduct did in fact harm the claimant, there shall be no cap on punitive damages.

(d) This subsection is not intended to prohibit an appropriate court from exercising its jurisdiction under s. 768.74 in determining the reasonableness of an award of punitive damages that is less than three times the amount of compensatory damages.

(2)



(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), punitive damages may not be awarded against a defendant in a civil action if that defendant establishes, before trial, that punitive damages have previously been awarded against that defendant in any state or federal court in any action alleging harm from the same act or single course of conduct for which the claimant seeks compensatory damages. For purposes of a civil action, the term "the same act or single course of conduct" includes acts resulting in the same manufacturing defects, acts resulting in the same defects in design, or failure to warn of the same hazards, with respect to similar units of a product.

(b) In subsequent civil actions involving the same act or single course of conduct for which punitive damages have already been awarded, if the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that the amount of prior punitive damages awarded was insufficient to punish that defendant's behavior, the court may permit a jury to consider an award of subsequent punitive damages. In permitting a jury to consider awarding subsequent punitive damages, the court shall make specific findings of fact in the record to support its conclusion. In addition, the court may consider whether the defendant's act or course of conduct has ceased. Any subsequent punitive damage awards must be reduced by the amount of any earlier punitive damage awards rendered in state or federal court.

(3) The claimant attorney's fees, if payable from the judgment, are, to the extent that the fees are based on the punitive damages, calculated based on the final judgment for punitive damages. This subsection does not limit the payment of attorney's fees based upon an award of damages other than punitive damages.

(4) The jury may neither be instructed nor informed as to the provisions of this section.

(5) The provisions of this section shall be applied to all causes of action arising after the effective date of this act.

History - (ss. 52, 65, ch. 86-160; s. 1, ch. 87-42; s. 5, ch. 87-50; s. 1, ch. 88-335; s. 71, ch. 91-282; ss. 2, 3, ch. 92-85; s. 16, ch. 97-94; s. 23, ch. 99-225.)



§768.733 FS | BONDS IN CLASS ACTIONS; LIMITATIONS

(1) In any civil action that is brought as a certified class action, the trial court, upon the posting of a bond or equivalent surety as provided in this section, shall stay the execution of any judgment, or portion thereof, entered on account of punitive damages pending completion of any appellate review of the judgment.

(2) The required bond or equivalent surety acceptable to the court for imposition of the stay shall be the lower of:

(a) The amount of the punitive-damages judgment, plus twice the statutory rate of interest; or

(b) Ten percent of the net worth of the defendant as determined by applying generally accepted accounting principles to the defendant's financial status as of December 31 of the year prior to the judgment for punitive damages;

provided that in no case shall the amount of the required bond or equivalent surety exceed \$100 million, regardless of the amount of punitive damages.

(3) If, at any time after notice and hearing, the court finds that a defendant who has posted a bond or equivalent surety pursuant to subsection (2) is purposefully moving assets with the intent to avoid the punitive-damages judgment, the court shall increase the bond or equivalent surety to the amount determined pursuant to paragraph (2)(a). If the defendant does not post the additional bond required by the court, the stay shall be revoked.

History - (s. 4, ch. 2000-128.)



§768.734 FS | CAPACITY TO SUE

(1)

(a) In any action asserting the right to class action status, the claimant class having capacity to sue shall be limited to residents of this state at the time of the alleged misconduct, except as provided in paragraph (b).

(b)

1. Before issuing a class certification order, the court hearing an action asserting the right to class action status may expand a class to include any nonresident whose claim is recognized within the claimant's state of residence and is not time barred, but whose rights cannot be asserted because the claimant's state of residence lacks personal jurisdiction over the defendant or defendants.

2. In addition, the claimant class may include nonresidents if the conduct giving rise to the claim occurred in or emanated from this state.

(2) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, in order to maintain a class action seeking statutory penalties under chapters 320, 501, 520, and 521, the class action claimants must allege and prove actual damages. This section does not limit or restrict the ability of the Attorney General to bring a class action for the recovery of statutory penalties, if otherwise authorized by law. However, class action claimants may seek to obtain, if appropriate, nonmonetary relief, including injunctive relief, orders or declaratory relief, and orders or judgments enjoining wrongful conduct, regardless of whether the class action claimants can prove any actual monetary damages. This section does not in any way limit or restrict the availability of such nonmonetary relief.

(3) This section does not affect any class action lawsuits involving federal or state civil rights laws.

History - (s. 1, ch. 2006-117.)



§768.735 FS | PUNITIVE DAMAGES; EXCEPTIONS; LIMITATION

(1) Sections 768.72(2)-(4), 768.725, and 768.73 do not apply to any civil action based upon child abuse, abuse of the elderly under chapter 415, or abuse of the developmentally disabled. Such actions are governed by applicable statutes and controlling judicial precedent. This section does not apply to claims brought pursuant to s. 400.023 or s. 429.29.

(2)

(a) In any civil action based upon child abuse, abuse of the elderly under chapter 415, or abuse of the developmentally disabled, and involving the award of punitive damages, the judgment for the total amount of punitive damages awarded to a claimant may not exceed three times the amount of compensatory damages awarded to each person entitled thereto by the trier of fact, except as provided in paragraph (b). This subsection does not apply to any class action.

(b) If any award for punitive damages exceeds the limitation specified in paragraph (a), the award is presumed to be excessive and the defendant is entitled to remittitur of the amount in excess of the limitation unless the claimant demonstrates to the court by clear and convincing evidence that the award is not excessive in light of the facts and circumstances that were presented to the trier of fact.

(c) This subsection is not intended to prohibit an appropriate court from exercising its jurisdiction under s. 768.74 in determining the reasonableness of an award of punitive damages which is less than three times the amount of compensatory damages.

(d) The jury may not be instructed or informed as to the provisions of this section.

(3) This section is remedial in nature and shall take effect upon becoming a law.

History - (s. 24, ch. 99-225; s. 11, ch. 2001-45; s. 107, ch. 2006-197.)



§768.736 FS | PUNITIVE DAMAGES; EXCEPTIONS FOR INTOXICATION

Sections 768.725 and 768.73 do not apply to any defendant who, at the time of the act or omission for which punitive damages are sought, was under the influence of any alcoholic beverage or drug to the extent that the defendant's normal faculties were impaired, or who had a blood or breath alcohol level of 0.08 percent or higher.

History - (s. 25, ch. 99-225.)



§768.737 FS | PUNITIVE DAMAGES; APPLICATION IN ARBITRATION

Where punitive damages are available as a remedy in an arbitration proceeding, ss. 768.72, 768.725, and 768.73 apply. When an award of punitive damages is made in an arbitration proceeding, the arbitrator who renders the award must issue a written opinion setting forth the conduct which gave rise to the award and how the arbitrator applied the standards in s. 768.72 to such conduct.

History - (s. 26, ch. 99-225.)



§768.74 FS | REMITTITUR AND ADDITUR

(1) In any action to which this part applies wherein the trier of fact determines that liability exists on the part of the defendant and a verdict is rendered which awards money damages to the plaintiff, it shall be the responsibility of the court, upon proper motion, to review the amount of such award to determine if such amount is excessive or inadequate in light of the facts and circumstances which were presented to the trier of fact.

(2) If the court finds that the amount awarded is excessive or inadequate, it shall order a remittitur or additur, as the case may be.

(3) It is the intention of the Legislature that awards of damages be subject to close scrutiny by the courts and that all such awards be adequate and not excessive.

(4) If the party adversely affected by such remittitur or additur does not agree, the court shall order a new trial in the cause on the issue of damages only.

(5) In determining whether an award is excessive or inadequate in light of the facts and circumstances presented to the trier of fact and in determining the amount, if any, that such award exceeds a reasonable range of damages or is inadequate, the court shall consider the following criteria:

(a) Whether the amount awarded is indicative of prejudice, passion, or corruption on the part of the trier of fact;

(b) Whether it appears that the trier of fact ignored the evidence in reaching a verdict or misconceived the merits of the case relating to the amounts of damages recoverable;

(c) Whether the trier of fact took improper elements of damages into account or arrived at the amount of damages by speculation and conjecture;

(d) Whether the amount awarded bears a reasonable relation to the amount of damages proved and the injury suffered; and



(e) Whether the amount awarded is supported by the evidence and is such that it could be adduced in a logical manner by reasonable persons.

(6) It is the intent of the Legislature to vest the trial courts of this state with the discretionary authority to review the amounts of damages awarded by a trier of fact in light of a standard of excessiveness or inadequacy. The Legislature recognizes that the reasonable actions of a jury are a fundamental precept of American jurisprudence and that such actions should be disturbed or modified with caution and discretion. However, it is further recognized that a review by the courts in accordance with the standards set forth in this section provides an additional element of soundness and logic to our judicial system and is in the best interests of the citizens of this state.

History - (s. 53, ch. 86-160.)



§768.76 FS | COLLATERAL SOURCES OF INDEMNITY

(1) In any action to which this part applies in which liability is admitted or is determined by the trier of fact and in which damages are awarded to compensate the claimant for losses sustained, the court shall reduce the amount of such award by the total of all amounts which have been paid for the benefit of the claimant, or which are otherwise available to the claimant, from all collateral sources; however, there shall be no reduction for collateral sources for which a subrogation or reimbursement right exists. Such reduction shall be offset to the extent of any amount which has been paid, contributed, or forfeited by, or on behalf of, the claimant or members of the claimant's immediate family to secure her or his right to any collateral source benefit which the claimant is receiving as a result of her or his injury.

(2) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Collateral sources" means any payments made to the claimant, or made on the claimant's behalf, by or pursuant to:

1. The United States Social Security Act, except Title XVIII and Title XIX; any federal, state, or local income disability act; or any other public programs providing medical expenses, disability payments, or other similar benefits, except those prohibited by federal law and those expressly excluded by law as collateral sources.

2. Any health, sickness, or income disability insurance; automobile accident insurance that provides health benefits or income disability coverage; and any other similar insurance benefits, except life insurance benefits available to the claimant, whether purchased by her or him or provided by others.

3. Any contract or agreement of any group, organization, partnership, or corporation to provide, pay for, or reimburse the costs of hospital, medical, dental, or other health care services.



4. Any contractual or voluntary wage continuation plan provided by employers or by any other system intended to provide wages during a period of disability.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, benefits received under Medicare, or any other federal program providing for a Federal Government lien on or right of reimbursement from the plaintiff's recovery, the Workers' Compensation Law, the Medicaid program of Title XIX of the Social Security Act or from any medical services program administered by the Department of Health shall not be considered a collateral source.

(3) In the event that the fees for legal services provided to the claimant are based on a percentage of the amount of money awarded to the claimant, such percentage shall be based on the net amount of the award as reduced by the amounts of collateral sources and as increased by insurance premiums paid.

(4) A provider of collateral sources that has a right of subrogation or reimbursement that has complied with this section shall have a right of reimbursement from a claimant to whom it has provided collateral sources if such claimant has recovered all or part of such collateral sources from a tortfeasor. Such provider's right of reimbursement shall be limited to the actual amount of collateral sources recovered by the claimant from a tortfeasor, minus its pro rata share of costs and attorney's fees incurred by the claimant in recovering such collateral sources from the tortfeasor. In determining the provider's pro rata share of those costs and attorney's fees, the provider shall have deducted from its recovery a percentage amount equal to the percentage of the judgment or settlement which is for costs and attorney's fees.



(5) Any disputes between the claimant and the provider as to the actual amount of collateral sources recovered by the claimant from a tortfeasor shall be subject to determination by a court of competent jurisdiction. In determining the actual amount of collateral sources recovered, the court shall give consideration to any offset in the amount of settlement or judgment for any comparative negligence of the claimant, limitations in the amount of liability insurance coverage available to the tortfeasor, or any other mitigating factors which the court deems equitable and appropriate under the circumstances.

(6) A claimant shall send the provider of any collateral sources, by certified or registered mail, notification of claimant's intent to claim damages from the tortfeasor. If the claimant has filed suit against the tortfeasor at the time such notice is sent, a copy of the complaint against the tortfeasor should be sent along with such notice. Such notice must include a statement that the provider of collateral sources will waive any right to subrogation or reimbursement unless it provides the claimant or claimant's attorney a statement asserting payment of benefits and right of subrogation or reimbursement within 30 days following receipt of the claimant's notification to the collateral sources provider.

(7) Within 30 days after receipt of the claimant's notification of intent to claim damages from the tortfeasor, the provider of collateral sources must provide the claimant or claimant's attorney a statement asserting its payment of collateral sources benefits and right of subrogation or reimbursement. Failure of the provider of collateral sources to provide such statement to the claimant or claimant's attorney within the 30-day period shall result in waiver of any claim to subrogation or reimbursement by the provider with respect to any such collateral sources. No right of subrogation or reimbursement shall exist for a provider of collateral sources that has waived its right of subrogation or reimbursement pursuant to this subsection.



(8) Reimbursement of a collateral sources provider pursuant to this section shall satisfy such collateral sources provider's right of subrogation or reimbursement. The provider shall have no right of subrogation or reimbursement for collateral sources payments made after the date of waiver, settlement, or judgment.

(9) A collateral source provider claiming a right of subrogation or reimbursement under this section shall cooperate with the claimant by producing such information as is reasonably necessary for the claimant to prove the nature and extent of the value of the collateral sources provided. The failure of the collateral source provider to cooperate may be taken into account by the court in determining the right to or the amount of the reimbursement asserted.

History - (s. 55, ch. 86-160; s. 1, ch. 93-245; s. 1173, ch. 97-102; s. 290, ch. 99-8.)

§768.77 FS | ITEMIZED VERDICT

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2), in any action to which this part applies in which the trier of fact determines that liability exists on the part of the defendant, the trier of fact shall, as a part of the verdict, itemize the amounts to be awarded to the claimant into the following categories of damages:

- (a) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for economic losses;
- (b) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for noneconomic losses; and
- (c) Amounts awarded to the claimant for punitive damages, if applicable.

(2) In any action for damages based on personal injury or wrongful death arising out of medical malpractice, whether in tort or contract, to which this part applies in which the trier of fact determines that liability exists on the part of the defendant, the trier of fact shall, as a part of the verdict, itemize the amounts to be awarded to the claimant into the following categories of damages:

- (a) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for:
 - 1. Past economic losses; and
 - 2. Future economic losses, not reduced to present value, and the number of years or part thereof which the award is intended to cover;
- (b) Amounts intended to compensate the claimant for:
 - 1. Past noneconomic losses; and
 - 2. Future noneconomic losses and the number of years or part thereof which the award is intended to cover; and
- (c) Amounts awarded to the claimant for punitive damages, if applicable.

History - (s. 56, ch. 86-160; s. 7, ch. 99-225; s. 68, ch. 2003-416.)



§768.78 FS | ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF PAYMENT OF DAMAGE AWARDS

(1)

(a) In any action to which this part applies in which the court determines that an award to compensate the claimant includes future economic losses which exceed \$250,000, payment of amounts intended to compensate the claimant for these losses shall be made by one of the following means, unless an alternative method of payment of damages is provided in this section:

1. The defendant may make a lump-sum payment for all damages so assessed, with future economic losses and expenses reduced to present value; or

2. Subject to the provisions of this subsection, the court shall, at the request of either party, unless the court determines that manifest injustice would result to any party, enter a judgment ordering future economic damages, as itemized pursuant to s. 768.77(1), in excess of \$250,000 to be paid in whole or in part by periodic payments rather than by a lump-sum payment.

(b) In entering a judgment ordering the payment of such future damages by periodic payments, the court shall make a specific finding of the dollar amount of periodic payments which will compensate the judgment creditor for these future damages after offset for collateral sources. The total dollar amount of the periodic payments shall equal the dollar amount of all such future damages before any reduction to present value, less any attorney's fees payable from future damages in accordance with paragraph (f). The period of time over which the periodic payments shall be made is the period of years determined by the trier of fact in arriving at its itemized verdict and shall not be extended if the plaintiff lives beyond the determined period. If the claimant has been awarded damages to be discharged by periodic payments and the claimant dies prior to the termination of the period of years during which periodic payments are to be made, the remaining liability of the defendant, reduced to present value, shall be paid into the estate of the claimant in a lump sum. The court may



order that the payments be equal or vary in amount, depending upon the need of the claimant.

(c) As a condition to authorizing periodic payments of future damages, the court shall require the defendant to post a bond or security or otherwise to assure full payment of these damages awarded by the judgment. A bond is not adequate unless it is written by a company authorized to do business in this state and is rated A+ by Best's. If the defendant is unable to adequately assure full payment of the damages, the court shall order that all damages be paid to the claimant in a lump sum pursuant to the verdict. No bond may be canceled or be subject to cancellation unless at least 60 days' advance written notice is filed with the court and the judgment creditor. Upon termination of periodic payments, the court shall order the return of the security, or so much as remains, to the judgment debtor.

(d)

1. In the event that the court finds that the judgment debtor has exhibited a continuing pattern of failing to timely make the required periodic payments, the court shall:

a. Order that all remaining amounts of the award be paid by lump sum within 30 days after entry of the order;

b. Order that, in addition to the required periodic payments, the judgment debtor pay the claimant all damages caused by the failure to timely make periodic payments, including court costs and attorney's fees; or

c. Enter other orders or sanctions as appropriate to protect the judgment creditor.

2. If it appears that the judgment debtor may be insolvent or that there is a substantial risk that the judgment debtor may not have the financial responsibility to pay all amounts due and owing the judgment creditor, the court may:

a. Order additional security;



b. Order that the balance of payments due be placed in trust for the benefit of the claimant;

c. Order that all remaining amounts of the award be paid by lump sum within 30 days after entry of the order; or

d. Order such other protection as may be necessary to assure the payment of the remaining balance of the judgment.

(e) The judgment providing for payment of future damages by periodic payments shall specify the recipient or recipients of the payments, the dollar amounts of the payments, the interval between payments, and the number of payments or the period of time over which payments shall be made. Periodic payments shall be subject to modification only as specified in this subsection.

(f) Claimant's attorney's fee, if payable from the judgment, shall be based upon the total judgment, adding all amounts awarded for past and future damages. The attorney's fee shall be paid from past and future damages in the same proportion. If a claimant has agreed to pay her or his attorney's fees on a contingency fee basis, the claimant shall be responsible for paying the agreed percentage calculated solely on the basis of that portion of the award not subject to periodic payments. The remaining unpaid portion of the attorney's fees shall be paid in a lump sum by the defendant, who shall receive credit against future payments for this amount. However, the credit against each future payment is limited to an amount equal to the contingency fee percentage of each periodic payment. Any provision of this paragraph may be modified by the agreement of all interested parties.

(g) Nothing in this subsection shall preclude any other method of payment of awards, if such method is consented to by the parties.



(2)

(a) In any action for damages based on personal injury or wrongful death arising out of medical malpractice, whether in tort or contract, in which the trier of fact makes an award to compensate the claimant for future economic losses, payment of amounts intended to compensate the claimant for these losses shall be made by one of the following means:

1. The defendant may make a lump-sum payment for all damages so assessed, with future economic losses and expenses reduced to present value; or
2. The court shall, at the request of either party, enter a judgment ordering future economic damages, as itemized pursuant to s. 768.77, to be paid by periodic payments rather than lump sum.

(b) For purposes of this subsection, "periodic payment" means provision for the spreading of future economic damage payments, in whole or in part, over a period of time, as follows:

1. A specific finding of the dollar amount of periodic payments which will compensate for these future damages after offset for collateral sources shall be made. The total dollar amount of the periodic payments shall equal the dollar amount of all such future damages before any reduction to present value.
2. The defendant shall be required to post a bond or security or otherwise to assure full payment of these damages awarded. A bond is not adequate unless it is written by a company authorized to do business in this state and is rated A+ by Best's. If the defendant is unable to adequately assure full payment of the damages, all damages, reduced to present value, shall be paid to the claimant in a lump sum. No bond may be canceled or be subject to cancellation unless at least 60 days' advance written notice is filed with the court and the claimant. Upon termination of periodic payments, the security, or so much as remains, shall be returned to the defendant.



3. The provision for payment of future damages by periodic payments shall specify the recipient or recipients of the payments, the dollar amounts of the payments, the interval between payments, and the number of payments or the period of time over which payments shall be made.

History - (ss. 57, 65, ch. 86-160; s. 5, ch. 87-50; s. 47, ch. 88-1; s. 25, ch. 88-277; s. 1, ch. 88-335; s. 1174, ch. 97-102; s. 8, ch. 99-225.)



§768.79 FS | OFFER OF JUDGMENT AND DEMAND FOR JUDGMENT

(1) In any civil action for damages filed in the courts of this state, if a defendant files an offer of judgment which is not accepted by the plaintiff within 30 days, the defendant shall be entitled to recover reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred by her or him or on the defendant's behalf pursuant to a policy of liability insurance or other contract from the date of filing of the offer if the judgment is one of no liability or the judgment obtained by the plaintiff is at least 25 percent less than such offer, and the court shall set off such costs and attorney's fees against the award. Where such costs and attorney's fees total more than the judgment, the court shall enter judgment for the defendant against the plaintiff for the amount of the costs and fees, less the amount of the plaintiff's award. If a plaintiff files a demand for judgment which is not accepted by the defendant within 30 days and the plaintiff recovers a judgment in an amount at least 25 percent greater than the offer, she or he shall be entitled to recover reasonable costs and attorney's fees incurred from the date of the filing of the demand. If rejected, neither an offer nor demand is admissible in subsequent litigation, except for pursuing the penalties of this section.

(2) The making of an offer of settlement which is not accepted does not preclude the making of a subsequent offer. An offer must:

(a) Be in writing and state that it is being made pursuant to this section.

(b) Name the party making it and the party to whom it is being made.

(c) State with particularity the amount offered to settle a claim for punitive damages, if any.

(d) State its total amount.

The offer shall be construed as including all damages which may be awarded in a final judgment.

(3) The offer shall be served upon the party to whom it is made, but it shall not be filed unless it is accepted or unless filing is necessary to enforce the provisions of this section.



(4) An offer shall be accepted by filing a written acceptance with the court within 30 days after service. Upon filing of both the offer and acceptance, the court has full jurisdiction to enforce the settlement agreement.

(5) An offer may be withdrawn in writing which is served before the date a written acceptance is filed. Once withdrawn, an offer is void.

(6) Upon motion made by the offeror within 30 days after the entry of judgment or after voluntary or involuntary dismissal, the court shall determine the following:

(a) If a defendant serves an offer which is not accepted by the plaintiff, and if the judgment obtained by the plaintiff is at least 25 percent less than the amount of the offer, the defendant shall be awarded reasonable costs, including investigative expenses, and attorney's fees, calculated in accordance with the guidelines promulgated by the Supreme Court, incurred from the date the offer was served, and the court shall set off such costs in attorney's fees against the award. When such costs and attorney's fees total more than the amount of the judgment, the court shall enter judgment for the defendant against the plaintiff for the amount of the costs and fees, less the amount of the award to the plaintiff.

(b) If a plaintiff serves an offer which is not accepted by the defendant, and if the judgment obtained by the plaintiff is at least 25 percent more than the amount of the offer, the plaintiff shall be awarded reasonable costs, including investigative expenses, and attorney's fees, calculated in accordance with the guidelines promulgated by the Supreme Court, incurred from the date the offer was served.

For purposes of the determination required by paragraph (a), the term "judgment obtained" means the amount of the net judgment entered, plus any postoffer collateral source payments received or due as of the date of the judgment, plus any postoffer settlement amounts by which the verdict was reduced. For purposes of the determination required by paragraph (b), the term "judgment obtained" means the amount of the net judgment entered, plus any postoffer settlement amounts by which the verdict was reduced.



(7)

(a) If a party is entitled to costs and fees pursuant to the provisions of this section, the court may, in its discretion, determine that an offer was not made in good faith. In such case, the court may disallow an award of costs and attorney's fees.

(b) When determining the reasonableness of an award of attorney's fees pursuant to this section, the court shall consider, along with all other relevant criteria, the following additional factors:

1. The then apparent merit or lack of merit in the claim.
2. The number and nature of offers made by the parties.
3. The closeness of questions of fact and law at issue.
4. Whether the person making the offer had unreasonably refused to furnish information necessary to evaluate the reasonableness of such offer.
5. Whether the suit was in the nature of a test case presenting questions of far-reaching importance affecting nonparties.
6. The amount of the additional delay cost and expense that the person making the offer reasonably would be expected to incur if the litigation should be prolonged.

(8) Evidence of an offer is admissible only in proceedings to enforce an accepted offer or to determine the imposition of sanctions under this section.

History - (s. 58, ch. 86-160; s. 48, ch. 90-119; s. 1175, ch. 97-102.)



§768.81 FS | COMPARATIVE FAULT

(1) DEFINITIONS. – As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Accident” means the events and actions that relate to the incident as well as those events and actions that relate to the alleged defect or injuries, including enhanced injuries.

(b) “Economic damages” means past lost income and future lost income reduced to present value; medical and funeral expenses; lost support and services; replacement value of lost personal property; loss of appraised fair market value of real property; costs of construction repairs, including labor, overhead, and profit; and any other economic loss that would not have occurred but for the injury giving rise to the cause of action.

(c) “Negligence action” means, without limitation, a civil action for damages based upon a theory of negligence, strict liability, products liability, professional malpractice whether couched in terms of contract or tort, or breach of warranty and like theories. The substance of an action, not conclusory terms used by a party, determines whether an action is a negligence action.

(d) “Products liability action” means a civil action based upon a theory of strict liability, negligence, breach of warranty, nuisance, or similar theories for damages caused by the manufacture, construction, design, formulation, installation, preparation, or assembly of a product. The term includes an action alleging that injuries received by a claimant in an accident were greater than the injuries the claimant would have received but for a defective product. The substance of an action, not the conclusory terms used by a party, determines whether an action is a products liability action.

(2) EFFECT OF CONTRIBUTORY FAULT. – In a negligence action, contributory fault chargeable to the claimant diminishes proportionately the amount awarded as economic and noneconomic damages for an injury attributable to the claimant’s contributory fault, but does not bar recovery.



(3) APPORTIONMENT OF DAMAGES. – In a negligence action, the court shall enter judgment against each party liable on the basis of such party's percentage of fault and not on the basis of the doctrine of joint and several liability.

(a)

1. In order to allocate any or all fault to a nonparty, a defendant must affirmatively plead the fault of a nonparty and, absent a showing of good cause, identify the nonparty, if known, or describe the nonparty as specifically as practicable, either by motion or in the initial responsive pleading when defenses are first presented, subject to amendment any time before trial in accordance with the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.

2. In order to allocate any or all fault to a nonparty and include the named or unnamed nonparty on the verdict form for purposes of apportioning damages, a defendant must prove at trial, by a preponderance of the evidence, the fault of the nonparty in causing the plaintiff's injuries.

(b) In a products liability action alleging that injuries received by a claimant in an accident were enhanced by a defective product, the trier of fact shall consider the fault of all persons who contributed to the accident when apportioning fault between or among them. The jury shall be appropriately instructed by the trial judge on the apportionment of fault in products liability actions where there are allegations that the injuries received by the claimant in an accident were enhanced by a defective product. The rules of evidence apply to these actions.

(4) APPLICABILITY. – This section does not apply to any action brought by any person to recover actual economic damages resulting from pollution, to any action based upon an intentional tort, or to any cause of action as to which application of the doctrine of joint and several liability is specifically provided by chapter 403, chapter 498, chapter 517, chapter 542, or chapter 895.



(5) MEDICAL MALPRACTICE. – Notwithstanding anything in law to the contrary, in an action for damages for personal injury or wrongful death arising out of medical malpractice, whether in contract or tort, if an apportionment of damages pursuant to this section is attributed to a teaching hospital as defined in s. 408.07, the court shall enter judgment against the teaching hospital on the basis of such party's percentage of fault and not on the basis of the doctrine of joint and several liability.

History - (ss. 60, 65, ch. 86-160; s. 5, ch. 87-50; s. 79, ch. 88-1; s. 43, ch. 88-277; s. 1, ch. 88-335; s. 38, ch. 91-110; s. 104, ch. 92-33; s. 27, ch. 99-225; s. 1, ch. 2006-6; s. 1, ch. 2011-215.)

¹Note –

(A. Section 2, ch. 2011-215, provides that “[t]he Legislature intends that this act be applied retroactively and overrule D’Amario v. Ford Motor Co., 806 So. 2d 424 (Fla. 2001), which adopted what the Florida Supreme Court acknowledged to be a minority view. That minority view fails to apportion fault for damages consistent with Florida’s statutory comparative fault system, codified in s. 768.81, Florida Statutes, and leads to inequitable and unfair results, regardless of the damages sought in the litigation. The Legislature finds that, in a products liability action as defined in this act, fault should be apportioned among all responsible persons.”

B. Section 3, ch. 2011-215, provides that “[t]his act is remedial in nature and applies retroactively. The Legislature finds that the retroactive application of this act does not unconstitutionally impair vested rights. Rather, the law affects only remedies, permitting recovery against all tortfeasors while lessening the ultimate liability of each consistent with this state’s statutory comparative fault system, codified in s. 768.81, Florida Statutes. In all cases, the Legislature intends that this act be construed consistent with the due process provisions of the State Constitution and the Constitution of the United States.”)



APPENDIX



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