

Sixty-third
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1171

Introduced by

Representatives Keiser, Kasper

Senators Klein, O'Connell

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new chapter to title 26.1 of the North Dakota Century
2 Code, relating to unclaimed life insurance benefits; and to amend and reenact section
3 47-30.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the state's unclaimed property act.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1.** A new chapter to title 26.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and
6 enacted as follows:

7 **Definitions.**

8 As used in this chapter:

- 9 1. "Contract" means an annuity contract issued in this state. The term does not include
10 an annuity used to fund an employment-based retirement plan or program in which the
11 insurer is not committed by terms of the annuity contract to pay death benefits to the
12 beneficiaries of specific plan participants.
- 13 2. "Death master file" means the United States social security administration's death
14 master file or any other database or service the commissioner has determined is at
15 least as comprehensive as the United States social security administration's death
16 master file for determining that an individual has reportedly died.
- 17 3. "Death master file match" means a search of the death master file or revised death
18 master file which results in a match of the social security number or of the name and
19 date of birth of an insured, annuity owner, or retained asset accountholder.
- 20 4. "Policy" means any policy or certificate of life insurance issued in this state which
21 provides a death benefit. The term does not include:
- 22 a. A policy or certificate of life insurance which provides a death benefit under an
23 employee benefit plan subject to the federal Employee Retirement Income
24 Security Act of 1974 [Pub. L. 93-406; 29 U.S.C. 1002 et seq.];

- 1 b. A policy or certificate of life insurance which provides a death benefit under an
2 employee benefit plan under any federal employee benefit program;
3 c. A policy or certificate of life insurance which is used to fund a preneed funeral
4 contract or prearrangement; or
5 d. A policy or certificate of credit life or accidental death insurance.
6 5. "Revised death master file" means the names added to the death master file since the
7 insurer's most recent semiannual comparison required under this chapter.

8 **Insurer conduct.**

- 9 1. ~~Within ninety days of the effective date of this Act~~Before November 1, 2014, an insurer
10 shall perform a comparison of the insurer's insureds' in-force life insurance policies
11 and retained asset accounts against a death master file in order to identify potential
12 matches of the insurer's insureds. Semiannually, an insurer shall perform a
13 comparison of the insurer's insureds' in-force life insurance policies and retained asset
14 accounts against the revised death master file in order to identify the potential
15 matches of the insurer's insureds.
16 2. For each potential match identified as a result of a death master file or revised death
17 master file match, within ~~ninety days~~twelve months of the potential match, the insurer
18 shall:
19 a. Complete a good-faith effort, which the insurer shall document, to confirm the
20 death of the insured or retained asset accountholder against other available
21 records and information; ~~and~~
22 b. Review the insurer's records to determine whether the individual who has died
23 purchased any other products with the insurer; and
24 c. Determine whether benefits are due in accordance with the applicable policy or
25 contract, and if benefits are due in accordance with the applicable policy or
26 contract the insurer shall:
27 (1) Use good-faith efforts, which the insurer shall document, to locate the
28 beneficiary or beneficiaries; and
29 (2) Provide the appropriate claims forms or instructions to the beneficiary or
30 beneficiaries to make a claim, including the need to provide an official death
31 certificate, if applicable under the policy or contract.

- 1 3. With respect to group life insurance, for each potential match identified as a result of a
2 death master file or revised death master file match, the insurer shall confirm the
3 possible death of an insured if the insurer maintains at least the following information
4 of those covered under a policy or certificate:
- 5 a. The social security number or the name and date of birth;
6 b. Beneficiary designation information;
7 c. Coverage eligibility;
8 d. Benefit amount; and
9 e. Premium payment status.
- 10 4. Every insurer shall implement procedures to account for:
- 11 a. Nicknames, initials used in lieu of a first or middle name, use of a middle name,
12 compound first and middle names, and interchanged first and middle names;
13 b. Compound last names, maiden or married names, and hyphens, blank spaces,
14 and apostrophes in last names;
15 c. Incomplete date of birth data and transposition of the month and date portions of
16 a date of birth; and
17 d. Incomplete social security numbers.
- 18 5. To the extent permitted by law, for each potential match identified as a result of a
19 death master file or revised death master file match, the insurer may disclose
20 minimum necessary personal information about the insured or beneficiary to:
- 21 a. A person the insurer reasonably believes may be able to assist the insurer locate
22 the beneficiary; or
23 b. A person otherwise entitled to payment of the claims proceeds.
- 24 ~~5.6.~~ An insurer or an insurer's service provider may not charge an insured, accountholder,
25 or beneficiary for any fees or costs associated with a comparison, search, or
26 verification conducted pursuant to this section.
- 27 ~~6.7.~~ The benefits from a life insurance policy or a retained asset account, plus any
28 applicable accrued interest must be first payable to the designated beneficiaries or
29 owners and if the beneficiaries or owners cannot be found, escheat to the state as
30 unclaimed property ~~under chapter 47-30.1~~as provided under this chapter.

1 ~~7.8.~~ Within one hundred twenty days twelve months following a potential match identified as
2 a result of a death master file or revised death master file match, an insurer shall
3 notify:

4 a. Notify the state abandoned property office that:

5 ~~a.~~ A a life insurance policy beneficiary or retained asset accountholder has not
6 submitted and completed a claim with the insurer; and

7 ~~b.~~ The that the insurer has complied with subsections 2 and 3 and has been unable,
8 after good-faith efforts documented by the insurer, to contact the retained asset
9 accountholder, beneficiary, or beneficiaries; and unable to complete the
10 necessary payment; and

11 ~~8.b.~~ Upon providing notice under subsection 7, an insurer immediately shall submit
12 the Submit any unclaimed life insurance benefits or unclaimed retained asset
13 accounts, plus any applicable accrued interest, to the state abandoned property
14 office as provided under chapter 47-30.1.

15 9. Except as otherwise provided under this chapter, chapter 47-30.1 applies to the
16 escheatment of unclaimed life insurance benefits or unclaimed retained asset
17 accounts.

18 Rulemaking.

19 The commissioner may adopt rules to limit an insurer's death master file comparisons and
20 revised death master file comparisons required under this chapter to the insurer's electronic
21 searchable files, to allow the commissioner to approve an insurer's plan and timeline for
22 conversion of the insurer's files to electronic searchable files, and to allow for phasing-in
23 compliance with this chapter according to an insurer's plan and timeline approved by the
24 commissioner.

25 Application.

26 Section 47-30.1-07 and chapter 47-30.1, relating to unclaimed property, apply to a contract
27 or policy to the extent the laws do not conflict with this chapter.

28 Unfair trade practices - Liability limitation.

29 Failure to meet any requirement of this chapter is a violation of chapter 26.1-04. This
30 chapter does not create a private cause of action for violation of this chapter. Once an insurer
31 submits unclaimed life insurance benefits or unclaimed retained asset accounts, plus any

1 applicable accrued interests, to the state abandoned property office in compliance with this
2 chapter, the insurer is relieved and indemnified from additional liability to any person relating to
3 the proceeds submitted. This indemnification from liability is in addition to any other protections
4 provided by law.

5 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 47-30.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **47-30.1-07. Funds owing under life insurance policies.**

- 8 1. ~~Funds~~Except as otherwise provided under this section, funds held or owing under any
9 life or endowment insurance policy or annuity contract that has matured or terminated
10 are presumed abandoned if unclaimed for ~~more than three years~~one year after the
11 funds became due and payable as established from the records of the insurance
12 company holding or owing the funds, ~~but property described in subdivision b of~~
13 ~~subsection 3 is presumed abandoned if unclaimed for more than three years.~~ If the
14 policy or annuity contract provides for death benefits and is a policy covered under
15 section 1 of this Act, the insurance company shall comply with section 1 of this Act.
- 16 2. If a person other than the insured or annuitant is entitled to the funds and an address
17 of the person is not known to the company or it is not definite and certain from the
18 records of the company who is entitled to the funds, it is presumed that the last known
19 address of the person entitled to the funds is the same as the last known address of
20 the insured or annuitant according to the records of the company.
- 21 3. For purposes of this chapter, a life or endowment insurance policy or annuity contract
22 not matured by actual proof of the death of the insured or annuitant according to the
23 records of the insurance company is matured and the proceeds due and payable if:
- 24 a. The company knows ~~that~~of the potential death of the insured or annuitant ~~has~~
25 ~~died,~~ in which case the company shall comply with subsection 6; or
- 26 b. (1) The insured has attained, or would have attained if the insured were living,
27 the limiting age under the mortality table on which the reserve is based;
- 28 (2) The policy was in force at the time the insured attained, or would have
29 attained, the limiting age specified in paragraph 1; and
- 30 (3) Neither the insured nor any other person appearing to have an interest in
31 the policy within the preceding three years, according to the records of the

1 company, has assigned, readjusted, or paid premiums on the policy,
2 subjected the policy to a loan, corresponded in writing with the company
3 concerning the policy, or otherwise indicated an interest as evidenced by a
4 memorandum or other record on file prepared by an employee of the
5 company.

6 4. For purposes of this chapter, the application of an automatic premium loan provision or
7 other nonforfeiture provision contained in an insurance policy does not prevent a
8 policy from being matured or terminated under subsection 1 if the insured has died or
9 the insured or the beneficiary of the policy otherwise has become entitled to the
10 proceeds thereof before the depletion of the cash surrender value of a policy by the
11 application of those provisions.

12 5. If the laws of this state or the terms of the life insurance policy require the company to
13 give notice to the insured or owner that an automatic premium loan provision or other
14 nonforfeiture provision has been exercised and the notice, given to an insured or
15 owner whose last known address according to the records of the company is in this
16 state, is undeliverable, the company shall make a reasonable search to ascertain the
17 policyholder's correct address to which the notice must be mailed.

18 6. ~~Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if~~ the company learns of the death or
19 potential death of the insured or annuitant ~~and the beneficiary has not communicated~~
20 ~~with the insurer,~~ within ~~four~~ twelve months after ~~ninety days~~ following the company
21 learning of the death or potential death, the company shall take reasonable steps to
22 pay the proceeds to the beneficiary.:

23 a. Complete a good-faith effort, which the company shall document, to confirm the
24 death of the insured or annuitant against other available records and information;

25 ~~and~~

26 b. Review the insurer's records to determine whether the individual who has died
27 purchased any other products with the insurer;

28 c. Determine whether benefits are due in accordance with the applicable insurance
29 policy or annuity contract, and if benefits are due in accordance with the
30 applicable policy or contract the company shall:

- 1 (1) Use good-faith efforts, which the company shall document, to locate the
2 beneficiary or beneficiaries; and
- 3 (2) Provide the appropriate claims forms or instructions to the beneficiary or
4 beneficiaries to make a claim, including the need to provide an official death
5 certificate, if applicable under the policy or contract; and
- 6 d. Report and deliver the unclaimed property to the administrator as abandoned
7 property if the benefits are due in accordance with the applicable insurance policy
8 or annuity contract and the beneficiary has not submitted and completed a claim
9 with the insurer.
- 10 7. ~~Commencing two years after July 1, 1985, every~~Every change of beneficiary form
11 issued by an insurance company under any life or endowment insurance policy or
12 annuity contract to an insured or owner who is a resident of this state must request the
13 following information:
- 14 a. The name of each beneficiary, or if a class of beneficiaries is named, the name of
15 each current beneficiary in the class;
- 16 b. The address of each beneficiary; and
- 17 c. The relationship of each beneficiary to the insured.