

Sixty-fifth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1214

Introduced by

Representative Klemin

Senator Hogue

(At the request of the Commission on Uniform State Laws)

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new chapter 47-36 of the North Dakota Century Code,  
2 relating to a Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets Act.

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

4 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 47-36 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as  
5 follows:

6 **47-36-01. Definitions.**

7 For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 8 1. "Account" means an arrangement under a terms-of-service agreement in which a  
9 custodian carries, maintains, processes, receives, or stores a digital asset of a user or  
10 provides goods or services to the user.
- 11 2. "Agent" means an attorney in fact granted authority under a durable or nondurable  
12 power of attorney.
- 13 3. "Carries" means engages in the transmission of an electronic communication.
- 14 4. "Catalog of electronic communications" means information that identifies each person  
15 with which a user has had an electronic communication, the time and date of the  
16 communication, and the electronic address of the person.
- 17 5. "Conservator or guardian" means a person appointed by a court to manage the estate  
18 of a living individual. The term includes a limited conservator or guardian.
- 19 6. "Content of an electronic communication" means information concerning the  
20 substance or meaning of the communication which:
  - 21 a. Has been sent or received by a user;
  - 22 b. Is in electronic storage by a custodian providing an electronic communication  
23 service to the public, or is carried or maintained by a custodian providing a  
24 remote computing service to the public; and

- 1           c. Is not readily accessible to the public.
- 2           7. "Court" means a district court with jurisdiction over matter that relates to this chapter.
- 3           8. "Custodian" means a person that carries, maintains, processes, receives, or stores a  
4           digital asset of a user.
- 5           9. "Designated recipient" means a person chosen by a user using an online tool to  
6           administer digital assets of the user.
- 7           10. "Digital asset" means an electronic record in which an individual has a right or interest.  
8           The term does not include an underlying asset or liability unless the asset or liability is  
9           itself an electronic record.
- 10          11. "Electronic" means relating to technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless,  
11          optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities.
- 12          12. "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images,  
13          sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire,  
14          radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical system that affects interstate  
15          or foreign commerce, but does not include:
- 16           a. Any wire or oral communication;
- 17           b. Any communication made through a tone-only paging device;
- 18           c. Any communication from an electronic or mechanical device which permits the  
19           tracking of the movement of a person or object; and
- 20           d. Electronic funds transfer information stored by a financial institution in a  
21           communications system used for the electronic storage and transfer of funds.
- 22          13. "Electronic communication service" means a custodian that provides to a user the  
23          ability to send or receive an electronic communication.
- 24          14. "Fiduciary" means an original, an additional, or a successor personal representative,  
25          conservator or guardian, agent, or trustee.
- 26          15. "Information" includes data, text, images, videos, sounds, codes, computer programs,  
27          software, and databases.
- 28          16. "Online tool" means an electronic service provided by a custodian that allows the user,  
29          in an agreement distinct from the terms-of-service agreement between the custodian  
30          and user, to provide directions for disclosure or nondisclosure of digital assets to a  
31          third person.

- 1        17. "Person" means an individual, estate, business or nonprofit entity, public corporation,  
2        government or governmental subdivision, agency, instrumentality, or other legal entity.
- 3        18. "Personal representative" means an executor, administrator, special administrator, or  
4        person that performs substantially the same function under the laws of this state other  
5        than this chapter.
- 6        19. "Power of attorney" means a record that grants an agent authority to act in the place of  
7        a principal.
- 8        20. "Principal" means an individual who grants authority to an agent in a power of  
9        attorney.
- 10       21. "Protected person" means an individual for whom a conservator or guardian has been  
11       appointed. The term includes an individual for whom an application for the  
12       appointment of a conservator or guardian is pending.
- 13       22. "Record" means information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored in  
14       an electronic or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form.
- 15       23. "Remote computing service" means a custodian that provides to a user computer  
16       processing services or the storage of digital assets by means of any wire, radio,  
17       electromagnetic, photo-optical, or photoelectronic facilities for the transmission of wire  
18       or electronic communications, and any computer facilities or related electronic  
19       equipment for the electronic storage of such communications.
- 20       24. "Terms-of-service agreement" means an agreement that controls the relationship  
21       between a user and a custodian.
- 22       25. "Trustee" means a fiduciary with legal title to property under an agreement or  
23       declaration that creates a beneficial interest in another. The term includes a successor  
24       trustee.
- 25       26. "User" means a person that has an account with a custodian.
- 26       27. "Will" includes a codicil, a testamentary instrument that only appoints an executor, and  
27       an instrument that revokes or revises a testamentary instrument.

28       **47-36-02. Applicability.**

- 29       1. This chapter applies to:
- 30       a. A fiduciary acting under a will or power of attorney executed before, on, or after  
31       the effective date of this chapter;

- 1           b. A personal representative acting for a decedent who died before, on, or after the  
2           effective date of this chapter;
- 3           c. A conservatorship or guardianship proceeding commenced before, on, or after  
4           the effective date of this chapter;
- 5           d. A trustee acting under a trust created before, on, or after the effective date of this  
6           chapter; and
- 7           e. A custodian if the user resides in this state or resided in this state at the time of  
8           the user's death.
- 9           2. This chapter does not apply to a digital asset of an employer used by an employee in  
10           the ordinary course of the employer's business.

11           **47-36-03. User direction for disclosure of digital assets.**

- 12           1. A user may use an online tool to direct the custodian to disclose to a designated  
13           recipient or not to disclose some or all of the user's digital assets, including the content  
14           of electronic communications. If the online tool allows the user to modify or delete a  
15           direction at all times, a direction regarding disclosure using an online tool overrides a  
16           contrary direction by the user in a will, trust, power of attorney, or other record.
- 17           2. If a user has not used an online tool to give direction under subsection 1 or if the  
18           custodian has not provided an online tool, the user may allow or prohibit in a will, trust,  
19           power of attorney, or other record, disclosure to a fiduciary of some or all of the user's  
20           digital assets, including the content of electronic communications sent or received by  
21           the user.
- 22           3. A user's direction under subsection 1 or 2 overrides a contrary provision in a  
23           terms-of-service agreement that does not require the user to act affirmatively and  
24           distinctly from the user's assent to the terms of service.

25           **47-36-04. Terms-of-service agreement.**

- 26           1. This chapter does not change or impair a right of a custodian or a user under a  
27           terms-of-service agreement to access and use digital assets of the user.
- 28           2. This chapter does not give a fiduciary or designated recipient any new or expanded  
29           rights other than those held by the user for whom, or for whose estate, the fiduciary or  
30           designated recipient acts.

1       3. A fiduciary's or designated recipient's access to digital assets may be modified or  
2       eliminated by a user, by federal law, or by a terms-of-service agreement if the user has  
3       not provided direction under section 47-36-03.

4       **47-36-05. Procedure for disclosing digital assets.**

5       1. When disclosing digital assets of a user under this chapter, the custodian may at its  
6       sole discretion:  
7       a. Grant a fiduciary or designated recipient full access to the user's account;  
8       b. Grant a fiduciary or designated recipient partial access to the user's account  
9       sufficient to perform the tasks with which the fiduciary or designated recipient is  
10       charged; or  
11       c. Provide a fiduciary or designated recipient a copy in a record of any digital asset  
12       that, on the date the custodian received the request for disclosure, the user could  
13       have accessed if the user were alive and had full capacity and access to the  
14       account.

15       2. A custodian may assess a reasonable administrative charge for the cost of disclosing  
16       digital assets under this chapter.

17       3. A custodian need not disclose under this chapter a digital asset deleted by a user.

18       4. If a user directs or a fiduciary requests a custodian to disclose under this chapter  
19       some, but not all, of the user's digital assets, the custodian need not disclose the  
20       assets if segregation of the assets would impose an undue burden on the custodian. If  
21       the custodian believes the direction or request imposes an undue burden, the  
22       custodian or fiduciary may seek an order from the court to disclose:

- 23       a. A subset limited by date of the user's digital assets;  
24       b. All of the user's digital assets to the fiduciary or designated recipient;  
25       c. None of the user's digital assets; or  
26       d. All of the user's digital assets to the court for review in camera.

27       **47-36-06. Disclosure of content of electronic communications of deceased user.**

28       If a deceased user consented or a court directs disclosure of the contents of electronic  
29       communications of the user, the custodian shall disclose to the personal representative of the  
30       estate of the user the content of an electronic communication sent or received by the user if the  
31       representative gives the custodian:

- 1       1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
- 2       2. A certified copy of the death certificate of the user;
- 3       3. A certified copy of the letter of appointment of the representative or a small estate
- 4       affidavit or court order;
- 5       4. Unless the user provided direction using an online tool, a copy of the user's will, trust,
- 6       power of attorney, or other record evidencing the user's consent to disclosure of the
- 7       content of electronic communications; and
- 8       5. If requested by the custodian:
- 9       a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier
- 10       assigned by the custodian to identify the user's account;
- 11       b. Evidence linking the account to the user; or
- 12       c. A finding by the court that:
- 13       (1) The user had a specific account with the custodian, identifiable by the
- 14       information specified in subdivision a;
- 15       (2) Disclosure of the content of electronic communications of the user would not
- 16       violate applicable state or federal law;
- 17       (3) Unless the user provided direction using an online tool, the user consented
- 18       to disclosure of the content of electronic communications; or
- 19       (4) Disclosure of the content of electronic communications of the user is
- 20       reasonably necessary for administration of the estate.

21       **47-36-07. Disclosure of other digital assets of deceased user.**

22       Unless the user prohibited disclosure of digital assets or the court directs otherwise, a

23 custodian shall disclose to the personal representative of the estate of a deceased user a

24 catalog of electronic communications sent or received by the user and digital assets, other than

25 the content of electronic communications, of the user if the representative gives the custodian:

- 26       1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
- 27       2. A certified copy of the death certificate of the user;
- 28       3. A certified copy of the letter of appointment of the representative or a small estate
- 29       affidavit or court order; and
- 30       4. If requested by the custodian:

- 1           a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier
- 2                 assigned by the custodian to identify the user's account;
- 3           b. Evidence linking the account to the user;
- 4           c. An affidavit stating that disclosure of the user's digital assets is reasonably
- 5                 necessary for administration of the estate; or
- 6           d. A finding by the court that:
  - 7                 (1) The user had a specific account with the custodian, identifiable by the
  - 8                         information specified in subdivision a; or
  - 9                 (2) Disclosure of the user's digital assets is reasonably necessary for
  - 10                         administration of the estate.

11           **47-36-08. Disclosure of content of electronic communications of principal.**

12           To the extent a power of attorney expressly grants an agent authority over the content of  
13 electronic communications sent or received by the principal and unless directed otherwise by  
14 the principal or the court, a custodian shall disclose to the agent the content if the agent gives  
15 the custodian:

- 16           1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
- 17           2. An original or copy of the power of attorney expressly granting the agent authority over
- 18                 the content of electronic communications of the principal;
- 19           3. A certification by the agent, under penalty of perjury, that the power of attorney is in
- 20                 effect; and
- 21           4. If requested by the custodian:
  - 22                 a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier
  - 23                         assigned by the custodian to identify the principal's account; or
  - 24                 b. Evidence linking the account to the principal.

25           **47-36-09. Disclosure of other digital assets of principal.**

26           Unless otherwise ordered by the court, directed by the principal, or provided by a power of  
27 attorney, a custodian shall disclose to an agent with specific authority over digital assets or  
28 general authority to act on behalf of a principal a catalog of electronic communications sent or  
29 received by the principal and digital assets, other than the content of electronic  
30 communications, of the principal if the agent gives the custodian:

- 31           1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;

- 1        2. An original or a copy of the power of attorney that gives the agent specific authority
- 2            over digital assets or general authority to act on behalf of the principal;
- 3        3. A certification by the agent, under penalty of perjury, that the power of attorney is in
- 4            effect; and
- 5        4. If requested by the custodian:
- 6            a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier
- 7                assigned by the custodian to identify the principal's account; or
- 8            b. Evidence linking the account to the principal.

9        **47-36-10. Disclosure of digital assets held in trust when trustee is original user.**

10        Unless otherwise ordered by the court or provided in a trust, a custodian shall disclose to a

11 trustee that is an original user of an account any digital asset of the account held in trust,

12 including a catalog of electronic communications of the trustee and the content of electronic

13 communications.

14        **47-36-11. Disclosure of contents of electronic communications held in trust when**

15 **trustee not original user.**

16        Unless otherwise ordered by the court, directed by the user, or provided in a trust, a

17 custodian shall disclose to a trustee that is not an original user of an account the content of an

18 electronic communication sent or received by an original or successor user and carried,

19 maintained, processed, received, or stored by the custodian in the account of the trust if the

20 trustee gives the custodian:

- 21        1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
- 22        2. A certified copy of the trust instrument or a certification of the trust under section
- 23            59-18-13 which includes consent to disclosure of the content of electronic
- 24            communications to the trustee;
- 25        3. A certification by the trustee, under penalty of perjury, that the trust exists and the
- 26            trustee is a currently acting trustee of the trust; and
- 27        4. If requested by the custodian:
- 28            a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier
- 29                assigned by the custodian to identify the trust's account; or
- 30            b. Evidence linking the account to the trust.



1        **47-36-12. Disclosure of other digital assets held in trust when trustee not original**  
2 **user.**

3        Unless otherwise ordered by the court, directed by the user, or provided in a trust, a  
4 custodian shall disclose to a trustee that is not an original user of an account a catalog of  
5 electronic communications sent or received by an original or successor user and stored,  
6 carried, or maintained by the custodian in an account of the trust and any digital assets, other  
7 than the content of electronic communications, in which the trust has a right or interest if the  
8 trustee gives the custodian:

- 9        1. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
- 10       2. A certified copy of the trust instrument or a certification of the trust under section  
11       59-18-13;
- 12       3. A certification by the trustee, under penalty of perjury, that the trust exists and the  
13       trustee is a currently acting trustee of the trust; and
- 14       4. If requested by the custodian:
  - 15       a. A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account identifier  
16       assigned by the custodian to identify the trust's account; or
  - 17       b. Evidence linking the account to the trust.

18       **47-36-13. Disclosure of digital assets to conservator or guardian of protected person.**

- 19       1. After an opportunity for a hearing under section 30.1-29-07, the court may grant a  
20       conservator or guardian access to the digital assets of a protected person.
- 21       2. Unless otherwise ordered by the court or directed by the user, a custodian shall  
22       disclose to a conservator or guardian the catalog of electronic communications sent or  
23       received by a protected person and any digital assets, other than the content of  
24       electronic communications, in which the protected person has a right or interest if the  
25       conservator or guardian gives the custodian:
  - 26       a. A written request for disclosure in physical or electronic form;
  - 27       b. A certified copy of the court order that gives the conservator or guardian authority  
28       over the digital assets of the protected person; and
  - 29       c. If requested by the custodian:

1           (1) A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account  
2                     identifier assigned by the custodian to identify the account of the protected  
3                     person; or

4           (2) Evidence linking the account to the protected person.

5       3. A conservator or guardian with general authority to manage the assets of a protected  
6       person may request a custodian of the digital assets of the protected person to  
7       suspend or terminate an account of the protected person for good cause. A request  
8       made under this section must be accompanied by a certified copy of the court order  
9       giving the conservator or guardian authority over the protected person's property.

10       **47-36-14. Fiduciary duty and authority.**

11       1. The legal duties imposed on a fiduciary charged with managing tangible property  
12       apply to the management of digital assets, including:

- 13       a. The duty of care;  
14       b. The duty of loyalty; and  
15       c. The duty of confidentiality.

16       2. A fiduciary's or designated recipient's authority with respect to a digital asset of a user:

- 17       a. Is subject to the applicable terms of service except as otherwise provided in  
18       subsection 4;  
19       b. Is subject to other applicable law, including copyright law;  
20       c. In the case of a fiduciary, is limited by the scope of the fiduciary's duties; and  
21       d. May not be used to impersonate the user.

22       3. A fiduciary with authority over the property of a decedent, protected person, principal,  
23       or settlor has the right to access any digital asset in which the decedent, protected  
24       person, principal, or settlor had a right or interest and which is not held by a custodian  
25       or subject to a terms-of-service agreement.

26       4. A fiduciary acting within the scope of the fiduciary's duties is an authorized user of the  
27       property of the decedent, protected person, principal, or settlor for the purpose of  
28       applicable computer fraud and unauthorized computer access laws, including  
29       applicable law on unauthorized computer access.

30       5. A fiduciary with authority over the tangible, personal property of a decedent, protected  
31       person, principal, or settlor:

- 1           a. Has the right to access the property and any digital asset stored in it; and  
2           b. Is an authorized user for the purpose of computer fraud and unauthorized  
3           computer access laws, including applicable law on unauthorized computer  
4           access.
- 5       6. A custodian may disclose information in an account to a fiduciary of the user when the  
6           information is required to terminate an account used to access digital assets licensed  
7           to the user.
- 8       7. A fiduciary of a user may request a custodian to terminate the user's account. A  
9           request for termination must be in writing, in either physical or electronic form, and  
10          accompanied by:
- 11          a. A certified copy of the death certificate of the user if the user is deceased;  
12          b. A certified copy of the letter of appointment of the representative or a small estate  
13             affidavit or court order, court order, power of attorney, or trust giving the fiduciary  
14             authority over the account; and
- 15          c. If requested by the custodian:
- 16             (1) A number, username, address, or other unique subscriber or account  
17                identifier assigned by the custodian to identify the user's account;  
18             (2) Evidence linking the account to the user; or  
19             (3) A finding by the court that the user had a specific account with the  
20                custodian, identifiable by the information specified in paragraph 1.

21       **47-36-15. Custodian compliance and immunity.**

- 22       1. Not later than sixty days after receipt of the information required under  
23           sections 47-36-06 through 47-36-14, a custodian shall comply with a request under  
24           this chapter from a fiduciary or designated recipient to disclose digital assets or  
25           terminate an account. If the custodian fails to comply, the fiduciary or designated  
26           recipient may apply to the court for an order directing compliance.
- 27       2. An order under subsection 1 directing compliance must contain a finding that  
28           compliance is not in violation of 18 U.S.C. 2702.
- 29       3. A custodian may notify the user that a request for disclosure or to terminate an  
30           account was made under this chapter.

- 1       4. A custodian may deny a request under this chapter from a fiduciary or designated  
2       recipient for disclosure of digital assets or to terminate an account if the custodian is  
3       aware of any lawful access to the account following the receipt of the fiduciary's  
4       request.
- 5       5. This chapter does not limit a custodian's ability to obtain or require a fiduciary or  
6       designated recipient requesting disclosure or termination under this chapter to obtain a  
7       court order that:
- 8       a. Specifies an account belongs to the protected person or principal;  
9       b. Specifies there is sufficient consent from the protected person or principal to  
10      support the requested disclosure; and
- 11      c. Contains a finding required by law other than this chapter.
- 12      6. A custodian and its officers, employees, and agents are immune from liability for an  
13      act or omission done in good faith in compliance with this chapter.

14      **47-36-16. Uniformity of application and construction.**

15      In applying and construing this chapter, consideration must be given to the need to promote  
16      uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that enact it.

17      **47-36-17. Relation to Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act.**

18      This chapter modifies, limits, or supersedes the Electronic Signatures in Global and  
19      National Commerce Act [Pub. L. 106-229; 114 Stat. 468; 15 U.S.C. 7001 et seq.] but does not  
20      modify, limit, or supersede section 101(c) of that Act [15 U.S.C. 7001(c)], or authorize electronic  
21      delivery of any of the notices described in section 103(b) of that Act [15 U.S.C. 7003(b)].