

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 108

BY REPRESENTATIVES LARVADAIN, ROBBY CARTER, JAMES, AND JEFFERSON

(On Recommendation of the Louisiana State Law Institute)

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact Code of Civil Procedure Articles 5183(A)(introductory paragraph),  
3 (1), and (2) and (B) and 5185(A) and (B), relative to proceeding in forma pauperis;  
4 to provide with respect to applications to proceed in forma pauperis; to provide for  
5 the rights of parties proceeding in forma pauperis; and to provide for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. Code of Civil Procedure Articles 5183(A)(introductory paragraph), (1),  
8 and (2) and (B) and 5185(A) and (B) are hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

9 Art. 5183. Affidavits of poverty; documentation; order

10 A. A person who wishes to exercise the privilege granted in this Chapter  
11 shall apply to the court for permission to do so in his first pleading, or in an ex parte  
12 written motion if requested later, to which ~~he~~ the applicant shall annex the following:

13 (1) ~~His~~ The applicant's affidavit that ~~he~~ the applicant is unable to pay the  
14 costs of court in advance, or as they accrue, or to furnish security therefor, because  
15 of ~~his~~ the applicant's poverty and lack of means, accompanied by any supporting  
16 documentation; ~~and.~~

17 (2) The affidavit of a third person other than ~~his~~ the applicant's attorney that  
18 he knows the applicant, knows ~~his~~ the applicant's financial condition, and believes  
19 that ~~he~~ the applicant is unable to pay the costs of court in advance, or as they accrue,  
20 or to furnish security therefor.

21 \* \* \*

22 B.(1) ~~When~~ Upon the filing of the completed application and supporting  
23 affidavits, ~~are presented to the court, it~~ the court shall ~~inquire into the facts, and if~~

1 satisfied that the applicant is entitled to the privilege granted in this Chapter it shall  
2 render an order ~~permitting~~ that does one of the following:

3 (a) Grants the application and allows the applicant to litigate; or to continue  
4 the litigation ~~of, the action or proceeding~~ without paying the costs in advance, ~~or as~~  
5 ~~they accrue, or furnishing security therefor.~~

6 (b) Denies the application with written reasons for such denial.

7 (c) Sets the matter for a contradictory hearing.

8 (2) The submission by the applicant of supporting documentation that the  
9 applicant is receiving public assistance benefits or that the applicant's income is less  
10 than or equal to one hundred twenty-five percent of the federal poverty level shall  
11 create a rebuttable presumption that the applicant is entitled to the privilege granted  
12 in this Chapter. If the court finds that the presumption has been rebutted, it shall  
13 provide written reasons for its finding.

14 (3) The court may reconsider ~~such an~~ its original order granting the  
15 application on its own motion at any time in a contradictory hearing.

16 Comments - 2021

17 Paragraph B of this Article has been amended to require the court to do one  
18 of three things after a person has filed a completed application to proceed in forma  
19 pauperis with the requisite supporting affidavits: (1) grant the application and allow  
20 the applicant to proceed in forma pauperis, (2) deny the application and provide  
21 written reasons for such denial, or (3) set the matter for a contradictory hearing. The  
22 requirement under this provision that written reasons be provided by the court upon  
23 the denial of an application is intended to provide the applicant with additional  
24 information necessary to, for example, correct a deficiency in the application. The  
25 form and contents of these written reasons are left to the discretion of the court.

26 \* \* \*

27 Art. 5185. Rights of party permitted to litigate without payment of costs

28 A. When an order of court permits a party to litigate without the payment of  
29 costs until this order is rescinded or expires, ~~he~~ the party is entitled to:

30 (1) All services required by law of a sheriff, clerk of court, court reporter,  
31 notary, or other public officer in, or in connection with, the judicial proceeding,  
32 including but not limited to the filing of pleadings and exhibits, the issuance of  
33 certificates, the certification of copies of notarial acts and public records, the

1 issuance and service of subpoenas and process, the taking and transcribing of  
 2 testimony, and the preparation of a record of appeal;

3 (2)(a) The right to the compulsory attendance of not more than six witnesses  
 4 for the purpose of testifying, either in court or by deposition, without the payment  
 5 of the fees, mileage, and other expenses allowed these witnesses by law. If a party  
 6 has been permitted to litigate without full payment of costs and is unable to pay for  
 7 witnesses desired by ~~him~~ the party, in addition to those summoned at the expense of  
 8 the parish, ~~he~~ the party shall make a sworn application to the court for the additional  
 9 witnesses. The application ~~must~~ shall allege that the testimony is relevant and  
 10 material and not cumulative and that the defendant cannot safely go to trial without  
 11 it. A short summary of the expected testimony of each witness shall be attached to  
 12 the application.

13 (b) The court shall make a private inquiry into the facts and, if satisfied that  
 14 the party is entitled to the privilege, shall render an order permitting the party to  
 15 subpoena additional witnesses at the expense of the parish. If the application is  
 16 denied, the court shall state the reasons for the denial in writing, which shall become  
 17 part of the record.

18 (3) The right to a trial by jury and to the services of jurors, when allowed by  
 19 law and applied for timely; ~~and~~.

20 (4) The right to have any judgment or order filed and to receive one certified  
 21 copy of the judgment or order.

22 (5) The right to a devolutive appeal, and to apply for supervisory writs.

23 B. ~~He~~ The party is not entitled to a suspensive appeal, or to an order or  
 24 judgment required by law to be conditioned on his furnishing security other than for  
 25 costs, unless ~~he~~ the party furnishes the necessary security therefor.

26 \* \* \*

27 Comments - 2021

28 Paragraph (A)(4) of this Article has been added to provide an applicant  
 29 proceeding in forma pauperis with the right to have a judgment or order filed and to  
 30 receive a certified copy of such judgment or order, regardless of whether the costs  
 31 of court have been paid. See Carline v. Carline, 644 So.2d 835 (La. App. 1 Cir.

1            1994) (holding that it was improper to require a plaintiff proceeding in forma  
2            pauperis to pay court costs before providing a certified copy of the judgment  
3            rendered in the proceedings).

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_