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SENATE BILL NO. 779

Senate Amendments in [] - February 16, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 25.1-229, 25.1-307, 25.1-406, and 33.2-1022 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 2 of Chapter 2 of Title 17.1 a section numbered 17.1-222.2, relating to eminent domain; condemnation proceedings; entry of order and recordation of certificate; disbursement of funds by circuit court clerk.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Senator Obenshain

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 25.1-229, 25.1-307, 25.1-406, and 33.2-1022 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 2 of Chapter 2 of Title 17.1 a section numbered 17.1-222.2 as follows:

§ 17.1-222.2. Entry of condemnation orders; payment of just compensation deposits.

Where an order entered in any condemnation proceeding or inverse condemnation proceeding directs the clerk to disburse just compensation, or any portion thereof, the clerk shall, unless otherwise provided in the order, [immediately promptly and in accordance with the provisions of this section] disburse such just compensation in the amount specified in the order and any interest accrued. The clerk shall disburse such just compensation no later than [five seven] business days after the later of (i) the entry of the order or (ii) receipt of the sum that the order directs the clerk to disburse.

§ 25.1-229. Selection of jurors.

A. Except as otherwise provided in this section, the provisions of Chapter 11 (§ 8.01-336 et seq.) of Title 8.01 shall apply to the selection of condemnation juries mutatis mutandis. While preserving the random selection process set forth in § 8.01-345, the jury commissioner shall determine the freeholder status of individuals randomly selected by reference to tax rolls or other reliable data the judge of the circuit court deems appropriate. Upon request of counsel, the clerk, sheriff, or other officer responsible for notifying jurors to appear in court for the trial in a case shall make available to counsel of record for each party in such case a copy of the jury panel to be used for such trial at least 10 full business days before such trial. Such copy of the jury panel shall include no fewer than 30 and no more than 75 persons eligible to serve as condemnation jurors as provided in § 25.1-228 and shall show the name, age, address, occupation, and employer of each person on the jury panel, as well as confirmation that each person is a freeholder of property within the jurisdiction in which the property to be condemned, or the greater portion thereof, is situated.

B. All of the acting jurors and all of the names drawn for alternate jurors shall be freeholders of property within the jurisdiction. On the day set for trial, jurors who appear shall be called to be sworn on their voir dire until a disinterested and impartial panel is obtained. A juror may be stricken for cause. From the impartial panel, the judge shall randomly select 13 jurors. From the panel of 13 jurors, each party shall have four peremptory strikes. The court may appoint alternate jurors. Five persons from a panel of ~~not~~ no fewer than 13 jurors shall constitute a jury in a condemnation case. If fewer than seven jurors remain before the court prior to the exercise of peremptory strikes, the trial may proceed and be heard by less than five jurors provided the parties agree. However, no trial shall proceed with fewer than three jurors.

C. The conclusion of the jurors need not be unanimous, and a majority of the jurors may act in the name of the jury.

D. In condemnation proceedings instituted by the Commissioner of Highways, a person owning structures or improvements for which an outdoor advertising permit has been issued by the Commissioner of Highways pursuant to § 33.2-1208 shall be deemed to be an "owner" for purposes of this section.

§ 25.1-307. Content of certificates; recordation of certificates.

A. A certificate shall set forth the description of the property and rights being taken or damaged, and the owner or owners, if known, of such property. A certificate through which easement rights are acquired shall describe the rights and purposes for which the easement is being acquired.

B. The certificate shall include a plat, drawing, or plan, in sufficient detail to disclose fairly the nature of such work or improvements, including specifications, elevations, and grade changes, if any, so as to enable the owner of such property to be reasonably informed of the nature, extent, and effect of such taking. The certificate shall specify the size of the fee or easement area being taken and, if multiple overlapping easements are taken, the sizes of the overlapping and non-overlapping areas. The certificate shall also state the public use project for which the property is being taken.

C. If a temporary construction easement is being acquired, the certificate shall set forth the calendar date on which it shall expire if that date is known to the condemnor. If the condemnor certifies that such date is

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59 not known, at such time the condemnor ascertains the date, the condemnor shall file certification of the
 60 information as provided by subsection D and shall simultaneously provide the landowner or the landowner's
 61 counsel, if any, a copy of such certification.

62 D. The authorized condemnor shall record a certificate of take or a certificate of deposit in the clerk's
 63 office of the court where deeds are recorded. The clerk shall record the certificate in the deed book and index
 64 it in the names of both (i) the person or persons who owned the land before the recordation of the certificate
 65 and (ii) the authorized condemnor.

66 *E. On the same day the certificate is recorded [; the authorized condemnor shall file in the land records,
 67 it shall also be filed] with the clerk [a Notice of Recording of Certificate that shall inform the property
 68 owner (i) that the certificate has been recorded, (ii) the amount represented by the certificate, and (iii) that
 69 the funds may be withdrawn pursuant to § 25.1-310 , and the clerk shall assign a single case number for the
 70 certificate that shall be used for all related subsequent filings, including a petition for condemnation filed
 71 pursuant to § 25.1-206] .*

72 **§ 25.1-406. Moving and related expenses.**

73 Whenever the acquisition of real property for a program or project undertaken by a state agency will result
 74 in the displacement of any person, the state agency shall make fair and reasonable relocation payments to the
 75 displaced person for:

76 1. Actual reasonable expenses in moving himself, his family, business, farm operation, or other personal
 77 property;

78 2. Actual direct losses of tangible personal property as a result of moving or discontinuing a business or
 79 farm operation, which payments shall not exceed an amount equal to the reasonable expenses that would have
 80 been required to relocate such property, as determined by the state agency;

81 3. Actual reasonable expenses in searching for a replacement business or farm; and

82 4. Actual reasonable expenses necessarily incurred in reestablishing a displaced farm, nonprofit
 83 organization, or small business at its new site, in accordance with criteria established by the state agency ~~but~~
 84 ~~not to exceed \$25,000.~~

85 **§ 33.2-1022. Certificates to describe land and list owner.**

86 A. The certificate shall set forth the description of the land or interest therein being taken or damaged and,
 87 if known, the owner of such property. A certificate through which easement rights are acquired shall describe
 88 the rights and purposes for which the easement is being acquired.

89 B. The certificate shall include a plat, drawing, or plan, in sufficient detail to disclose fairly the nature of
 90 such work or improvements, including specifications, elevations, and grade changes, if any, so as to enable
 91 the owner of such property to be reasonably informed of the nature, extent, and effect of such taking. The
 92 certificate shall specify the size of the fee or easement area being taken and, if multiple overlapping
 93 easements are taken, the sizes of the overlapping and non-overlapping areas. The certificate shall also state
 94 the public use project for which the property is being taken.

95 C. If a temporary construction easement is being acquired, the certificate shall set forth the calendar date
 96 on which it shall expire, if such date is known to the Commissioner of Highways. If the Commissioner of
 97 Highways certifies that such date is not known, at such time the date is ascertained, the Commissioner of
 98 Highways shall file certification of the information as provided by subsection D of § 25.1-307 and shall
 99 simultaneously provide the landowner or the landowner's counsel, if any, a copy of such certification.

100 D. The Commissioner of Highways shall record a certificate of take or a certificate of deposit in the
 101 clerk's office of the court where deeds are recorded. The clerk shall record such certificate in the deed book
 102 and index it in the names of both (i) the person who owned the land before the recordation of the certificate
 103 and (ii) the Commissioner of Highways.

104 *E. On the same day the certificate is recorded [; the authorized condemnor shall file in the land records,
 105 it shall also be filed] with the clerk [a Notice of Recording of Certificate that shall inform the property
 106 owner (i) that the certificate has been recorded, (ii) the amount represented by the certificate, and (iii) that
 107 the funds may be withdrawn pursuant to § 33.2-1023 , and the clerk shall assign a single case number for the
 108 certificate that shall be used for all related subsequent filings, including a petition for condemnation filed
 109 pursuant to § 25.1-206] .*

110 **2. That the provisions of §§ 25.1-307 and 33.2-1022, as amended by this act, shall only apply to a**
 111 **petition for condemnation filed or certificate of take recorded on or after July 1, 2026.**