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1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 1477**

2 Offered January 14, 2015

3 Prefiled January 2, 2015

4 A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 64.2-109, 64.2-110, and 64.2-1622 of the Code of Virginia and to
5 amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 3 of Chapter 1 of Title 64.2 sections numbered
6 64.2-111 through 64.2-119, relating to creation of the Uniform Fiduciary Access to Digital Assets
7 Act.

8 Patrons—Leftwich, Peace, Wright and Simon; Senator: Ruff

9 Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

10 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**11 1. That §§ 64.2-109, 64.2-110, and 64.2-1622 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted
12 and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 3 of Chapter 1 of Title 64.2
13 sections numbered 64.2-111 through 64.2-119 as follows:14 **§ 64.2-109. Definitions.**

15 As used in this article, unless the context requires otherwise:

16 "Account holder" means a person who has entered into a terms-of-service agreement with a
17 custodian or a fiduciary for such person.18 "Agent" means a person granted authority to act for a principal under a power of attorney, whether
19 denominated an agent, attorney-in-fact, or otherwise. The term includes an original agent, coagent,
20 successor agent, and a person to which an agent's authority is delegated.

21 "Carries" means engages in the transmission of electronic communications.

22 "Catalogue of electronic communications" means information that identifies each person with whom
23 an account holder has had an electronic communication, the time and date of the communication, and
24 the electronic address of the person.25 "Conservator" means a person appointed by a court to manage the estate of a living individual. The
26 term includes a limited conservator.27 "Content of an electronic communication" means information concerning the substance or meaning
28 of the communication which: (i) has been sent or received by an account holder; (ii) is in electronic
29 storage by a custodian providing an electronic-communication service to the public or is carried or
30 maintained by a custodian providing a remote-computing service to the public; and (iii) is not readily
31 accessible to the public.32 "Court" means the circuit court for the county or city having jurisdiction over the fiduciary in
33 matters relating to the content of this article.34 "Custodian" means a person that carries, maintains, processes, receives, or stores a digital asset of
35 an account holder.36 "Digital account asset" means an a record that is electronic account maintained, managed, controlled,
37 or operated by a minor in accordance with a terms of service agreement legally executed by such minor
38 and includes blogging, email, multimedia, personal, social networking, and other online accounts or
39 comparable items as technology develops. "Digital account" excludes accounts as such term is defined in
40 § 6.2-604 to which a financial institution, financial institution holding company, or affiliate or subsidiary
41 of a financial institution is a party. The term does not include an underlying asset or liability unless the
42 asset or liability is itself a record that is electronic.43 "Electronic" means relating to technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical,
44 electromagnetic, or similar capabilities.45 "Electronic communication" has the same meaning as the definition provided in 18 U.S.C.
46 § 2510(12).47 "Electronic-communication service" means a custodian that provides to an account holder the ability
48 to send or receive an electronic communication.49 "Fiduciary" means an original, additional, or successor personal representative, conservator,
50 guardian, agent, or trustee. "Fiduciary" also means a designated successor or successor under the
51 Virginia Small Estate Act (§ 64.2-600 et seq.).52 "Governing instrument" means a will, trust, instrument creating a power of attorney, or other
53 dispositive or nominative instrument.54 "Guardian" means a person appointed by a court to manage the person of a living individual adult
55 pursuant to Chapter 20 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.). "Guardian" also means a person appointed by a court to
56 manage the estate of a minor pursuant to Chapter 17 (§ 64.2-1700 et seq.). "Guardian" also includes a

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59 *limited guardian.*

60 "Information" means data, text, images, videos, sounds, codes, computer games, software, databases,
61 or something that is substantially similar.

62 "Person" means an individual, estate, business or nonprofit entity, public corporation, government or
63 governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, or other legal entity.

64 "Personal representative" has the same meaning as provided in § 64.2-100 means an executor,
65 administrator, curator, or a person that performs substantially the same function under the laws of the
66 Commonwealth. "Personal representative" also means a designated successor or successor under the
67 Virginia Small Estate Act (§ 64.2-600 et seq.).

68 "Power of attorney" means a record that grants an agent authority to act in the place of a principal.

69 "Protected person" means an individual for whom a conservator or guardian has been appointed.
70 "Protected person" includes an individual for whom an application for the appointment of a conservator
71 or guardian is pending.

72 "Record" means information that is inscribed on a tangible medium or that is stored in an electronic
73 or other medium and is retrievable in perceivable form.

74 "Remote-computing service" means a custodian that provides to an account holder computer
75 processing services or the storage of digital assets by means of an electronic communications system, as
76 defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2510(14).

77 "Terms of service" means any legally executed agreement that controls
78 a the relationship between a minor and any person or entity that maintains, manages, or supervises a
79 digital account of a minor or an account holder and a custodian.

80 "Trustee" means a fiduciary with legal title to property pursuant to an agreement or declaration that
81 creates a beneficial interest in another. "Trustee" also means a successor trustee.

82 "Will" includes a codicil, testamentary instrument that only appoints an executor, and instrument that
83 revokes or revises a testamentary instrument.

84 **§ 64.2-110. Access by personal representative to digital assets of decedent.**

85 A. Subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114, and unless otherwise ordered by the court or provided
86 in the will of a decedent, the personal representative of a deceased minor who was domiciled in the
87 Commonwealth at the time of his death may assume the deceased minor's terms of service agreement
88 for a digital account with an Internet service provider, communications service provider, or other online
89 account service provider for purposes of consenting to and obtaining the disclosure of the contents of
90 the deceased minor's communications and subscriber records pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2702 unless such
91 access is contrary to the express provisions of a will, trust instrument, power of attorney, or court order.
92 Such access shall be subject to the same license, restrictions, or legal obligations of the deceased minor.

93 B. An Internet service provider, communications service provider, or other online account service
94 provider shall provide to the personal representative access to the deceased minor's communications and
95 subscriber records pursuant to subsection A within 60 days from the receipt of (i) a written request for
96 such access by the personal representative and (ii) a copy of the death certificate of the deceased minor.
97 However, if the Internet service provider, communications service provider, or other online account
98 service provider receives notice of a claim or dispute regarding providing access to the deceased minor's
99 communications and subscriber records pursuant to this subsection, such provider is not required to
100 comply with any written request received pursuant to this subsection until a final nonappealable
101 judgment is rendered by a court of competent jurisdiction determining the rights in or entitlement to any
102 content in the deceased minor's digital account.

103 C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require an Internet service provider, communications
104 service provider, or other online account service provider to disclose any information in violation of any
105 applicable state or federal law.

106 D. No person may maintain a cause of action against an Internet service provider, communications
107 service provider, or other online account service provider for acting in compliance with this section the
108 decedent has the right to access:

109 1. The content of an electronic communication that the custodian is permitted to disclose under 18
110 U.S.C. § 2702(b) of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act;

111 2. Any catalogue of electronic communications sent or received by the decedent; and

112 3. Any other digital asset in which, at death, the decedent had a right or interest.

113 **§ 64.2-111. Access by conservator or guardian to digital assets of protected person.**

114 Subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114, the court, after an opportunity for hearing under Chapter 20
115 (§ 64.2-2000 et seq.), may grant a conservator or guardian the right to access:

116 1. The content of an electronic communication that the custodian is permitted to disclose under 18
117 U.S.C. § 2702(b) of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act;

118 2. Any catalogue of electronic communications sent or received by the protected person; and

119 3. Any other digital asset in which the protected person has a right or interest.

120 **§ 64.2-112. Access by agent to digital assets of principal.**

121 A. To the extent a power of attorney expressly grants an agent authority over the content of an
122 electronic communication of the principal and subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114, the agent has the
123 right to access the content of an electronic communication that the custodian is permitted to disclose
124 under 18 U.S.C. § 2702(b) of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act.

125 B. Subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114 and unless otherwise ordered by the court or provided by a
126 power of attorney, an agent has the right to access:

- 127 1. Any catalogue of electronic communications sent or received by the principal; and
128 2. Any other digital asset in which the principal has a right or interest.

129 **§ 64.2-113. Access by trustee to digital assets.**

130 A. Subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114 and unless otherwise ordered by the court or provided in
131 the terms of a trust, a trustee that is an original account holder has the right to access any digital asset
132 held in trust, including any catalogue of electronic communications of the trustee and the content of an
133 electronic communication.

134 B. Subject to subsection B of § 64.2-114 and unless otherwise ordered by the court or provided in a
135 trust, a trustee that is not an original account holder has the right to access:

- 136 1. The content of an electronic communication that the custodian is permitted to disclose under 18
137 U.S.C. § 2702(b) of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act;
- 138 2. Any catalogue of electronic communications sent or received by the original or any successor
139 account holder; and
- 140 3. Any other digital asset in which the original or any successor account holder has a right or
141 interest.

142 **§ 64.2-114. Fiduciary authority.**

143 A. A fiduciary that is an account holder or has the right under this article to access a digital asset
144 of an account holder:

145 1. Subject to the terms-of-service agreement, copyright law, and other applicable law, may take any
146 action concerning the asset to the extent of the account holder's authority and the fiduciary's power
147 under the laws of the Commonwealth;

148 2. Has, for the purpose of applicable electronic privacy laws, the lawful consent of the account
149 holder for the custodian to divulge the content of an electronic communication to the fiduciary; and

150 3. Is, for the purpose of applicable computer-fraud and unauthorized computer-access laws, including
151 Article 7.1 (§ 18.2-152.1 et seq.) of Chapter 5 of Title 18.2, an authorized user.

152 B. Unless an account holder, after July 1, 2015, agrees to a provision in a terms-of-service
153 agreement that limits a fiduciary's access to a digital asset of the account holder by an affirmative act
154 separate from the account holder's assent to other provisions of the terms-of-service agreement:

155 1. The provision is void as against the public policy of the Commonwealth; and

156 2. The fiduciary's access under this article to a digital asset does not violate the terms-of-service
157 agreement even if the agreement requires notice of a change in the account holder's status.

158 C. A choice-of-law provision in a terms-of-service agreement is unenforceable against a fiduciary
159 acting under this article to the extent the provision designates law that enforces a limitation on a
160 fiduciary's access to a digital asset, and the limitation is void under subsection B.

161 D. As to tangible personal property capable of receiving, storing, processing, or sending a digital
162 asset, a fiduciary with authority over the property of a decedent, protected person, principal, or settlor:

163 1. Has the right to access the property and any digital asset stored in it; and

164 2. Is an authorized user for purposes of any applicable computer-fraud and unauthorized
165 computer-access laws, including Article 7.1 (§ 18.2-152.1 et seq.) of Chapter 5 of Title 18.2.

166 **§ 64.2-115. Compliance.**

167 A. If a fiduciary with a right under this article to access a digital asset of an account holder
168 complies with subsection B, the custodian shall comply with the fiduciary's request in a record for:

169 1. Access to the asset;

170 2. Control of the asset; and

171 3. A copy of the asset to the extent permitted by copyright law.

172 B. If a request under subsection A is made by:

173 1. A personal representative with the right of access under § 64.2-110, the request must be
174 accompanied by a certified copy of the letter of appointment of the personal representative or a
175 small-estate affidavit or court order;

176 2. A conservator or guardian with the right of access under § 64.2-111, the request must be
177 accompanied by a certified copy of the court order that gives the conservator or guardian authority
178 over the digital asset;

179 3. An agent with the right of access under § 64.2-112, the request must be accompanied by an
180 original or a copy of the power of attorney that authorizes the agent to exercise authority over the
181 digital asset and a certification of the agent, under penalty of perjury, that the power of attorney is in

182 effect; and

183 4. A trustee with the right of access under § 64.2-113, the request must be accompanied by a
184 certified copy of the trust instrument, or a certification of the trust under § 64.2-804 that authorizes the
185 trustee to exercise authority over the digital asset.

186 C. A custodian shall comply with a request made under subsection A no later than 60 days after
187 receipt. If the custodian fails to comply, the fiduciary may apply to the court for an order directing
188 compliance.

189 D. This section does not limit the right of a person to obtain a copy of a trust instrument in a
190 judicial proceeding concerning the trust.

191 **§ 64.2-116. Custodian immunity.**

192 A custodian and its officers, employees, and agents are immune from liability for an act or omission
193 done in good faith in compliance with this article.

194 **§ 64.2-117. Uniformity of application and construction.**

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

197 **§ 64.2-118. Relation to Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act.**

198 This article modifies, limits, or supersedes the Electronic Signatures in Global and National
199 Commerce Act (15 U.S.C. § 7001 et seq.), but does not modify, limit, or supersede § 101(c) of that act,
200 15 U.S.C. § 7001(c), or authorize electronic delivery of any of the notices described in § 103(f) of that
201 act, 15 U.S.C. § 7002(b).

202 **§ 64.2-119. Applicability.**

203 A. Subject to subsection B, this article applies to:

204 1. A fiduciary or agent acting under a will or power of attorney executed before, on, or after July 1,
205 2015;

206 2. A personal representative acting for a decedent who died before, on, or after July 1, 2015;

207 3. A conservatorship or guardianship proceeding, whether pending in a court or commenced before,
208 on, or after July 1, 2015; and

209 4. A trustee acting under a trust created before, on, or after July 1, 2015.

210 B. This article does not apply to a digital asset of an employer used by an employee in the ordinary
211 course of the employer's business.

212 **§ 64.2-1622. Authority that requires specific grant; grant of general authority.**

213 A. Subject to the provisions of subsection H, an agent under a power of attorney may do the
214 following on behalf of the principal or with the principal's property only if the power of attorney
215 expressly grants the agent the authority and exercise of the authority is not otherwise prohibited or
216 limited by another statute, agreement, or instrument to which the authority or property is subject:

217 1. Create, amend, revoke, or terminate an inter vivos trust;

218 2. Make a gift;

219 3. Create or change rights of survivorship;

220 4. Create or change a beneficiary designation;

221 5. Delegate authority granted under the power of attorney;

222 6. Waive the principal's right to be a beneficiary of a joint and survivor annuity, including a survivor
223 benefit under a retirement plan; or

224 7. Exercise fiduciary powers that the principal has authority to delegate; or
225 8. Have authority over the content of an electronic communication of the principal as provided by
226 §§ 64.2-112 and 64.2-114.

227 B. Notwithstanding a grant of authority to do an act described in subsection A or H, unless the
228 power of attorney otherwise provides, an agent that is not an ancestor, spouse, or descendant of the
229 principal may not exercise authority under a power of attorney to create in the agent, or in an individual
230 to whom the agent owes a legal obligation of support, an interest in the principal's property, whether by
231 gift, right of survivorship, beneficiary designation, disclaimer, or otherwise.

232 C. Subject to subsections A, B, D, and E, if a power of attorney grants to an agent authority to do
233 all acts that a principal could do, the agent has the general authority described in §§ 64.2-1625 through
234 64.2-1637.

235 D. Unless the power of attorney otherwise provides and subject to subsection H, a grant of authority
236 to make a gift is subject to § 64.2-1638.

237 E. Subject to subsections A, B, and D, if the subjects over which authority is granted in a power of
238 attorney are similar or overlap, the broadest authority controls.

239 F. Authority granted in a power of attorney is exercisable with respect to property that the principal
240 has when the power of attorney is executed or acquires later, whether or not the property is located in
241 the Commonwealth and whether or not the authority is exercised or the power of attorney is executed in
242 the Commonwealth.

243 G. An act performed by an agent pursuant to a power of attorney has the same effect and inures to

244 the benefit of and binds the principal and the principal's successors in interest as if the principal had
245 performed the act.

246 H. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, if a power of attorney grants to an agent
247 authority to do all acts that a principal could do, the agent shall have the authority to make gifts in any
248 amount of any of the principal's property to any individuals or to organizations described in §§ 170(c)
249 and 2522(a) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding future provisions of federal tax law, or both,
250 in accordance with the principal's personal history of making or joining in the making of lifetime gifts.
251 This subsection shall not in any way impair the right or power of any principal, by express words in the
252 power of attorney, to authorize, or limit the authority of, an agent to make gifts of the principal's
253 property.

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