

1 SENATE BILL NO. 488  
2 INTRODUCED BY D. ZOLNIKOV  
3  
4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ABOLISHING COMMON-LAW MARRIAGE; REMOVING A MAN  
5 AND A WOMAN DEPORTING THEMSELVES AS HUSBAND AND WIFE AS PROOF OF COMMON-LAW  
6 MARRIAGE AS A DISPUTABLE PRESUMPTION; PROVIDING FOR INVALIDITY OF COMMON-LAW  
7 MARRIAGES CONTRACTED ON OR AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ACT; PROVIDING FOR THE  
8 REGISTRY OF A COMMON-LAW MARRIAGE FOR VALIDITY OF COMMON-LAW MARRIAGES  
9 CONTRACTED PRIOR TO THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ACT IF PROVEN BY A PREPONDERANCE OF  
10 THE EVIDENCE; PROVIDING FOR A COURT FINDING OF AN EQUITABLE INTEREST IN REAL OR  
11 PERSONAL PROPERTY OF NONSPOUSAL PARTNERS; AMENDING SECTIONS 26-1-602 AND 40-1-403,  
12 MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

13  
14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

15  
16 **Section 1.** Section 26-1-602, MCA, is amended to read:

17 **"26-1-602. Disputable presumptions.** All other presumptions are "disputable presumptions" and  
18 may be controverted by other evidence. The following are of that kind:

- 19 (1) A person is innocent of crime or wrong.  
20 (2) An unlawful act was done with an unlawful intent.  
21 (3) A person intends the ordinary consequence of the person's voluntary act.  
22 (4) A person takes ordinary care of the person's own concerns.  
23 (5) Evidence willfully suppressed would be adverse if produced.  
24 (6) More satisfactory evidence would be adverse if weaker and less satisfactory evidence is  
25 offered and it is within the power of the party to offer more satisfactory evidence.  
26 (7) Money paid by one to another was due the latter.  
27 (8) A thing delivered by one to another belonged to the latter.

**Amendment - 2nd Reading/2nd House-tan - Requested by: Casey Knudsen - (H) Committee of the Whole**

- 2023

68th Legislature 2023

Drafter: Andria Hardin,

SB0488.002.001

1 or fact.

2 (28) Things have happened according to the ordinary course of nature and the ordinary habits of  
3 life.

4 (29) Persons acting as partners have entered into a contract of partnership.

5 ~~(30) A man and a woman deporting themselves as husband and wife have entered into a lawful~~  
6 ~~contract of marriage.~~

7 ~~(31)(30)~~ A child born in lawful wedlock is legitimate.

8 ~~(32)(31)~~ A thing once proved to exist continues as long as is usual with things of that nature.

9 ~~(33)(32)~~ The law has been obeyed.

10 ~~(34)(33)~~ A printed and published book purporting to be printed or published by public authority was so  
11 printed or published.

12 ~~(35)(34)~~ A printed and published book purporting to contain reports of cases adjudged in the tribunals  
13 of the state or country where the book is published contains correct reports of such cases.

14 ~~(36)(35)~~ A trustee or other person whose duty it was to convey real property to a particular person has  
15 actually conveyed the property to the particular person. This presumption applies when it is necessary to  
16 perfect the title of the person or the person's successor in interest.

17 ~~(37)(36)~~ When there has been uninterrupted use by the public of land for a burial ground for 5 years,  
18 with the consent of the owner and without a reservation of rights, the owner intended to dedicate it to the public  
19 for that purpose.

20 ~~(38)(37)~~ There was a good and sufficient consideration for a written contract."  
21

22 **Section 2.** Section 40-1-403, MCA, is amended to read:

23 **"40-1-403. ~~Validity~~ Invalidity of common-law marriage --registry of common-law marriage. (1)**

24 ~~Common-law marriages are not invalidated by this chapter contracted on or after [the effective date of this act]~~  
25 ~~are invalid.~~

26 (2) COMMON-LAW MARRIAGES CONTRACTED PRIOR TO [THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ACT] ARE VALID IF  
27 PROVEN BY A PREPONDERANCE OF THE EVIDENCE.

**Amendment - 2nd Reading/2nd House-tan - Requested by: Casey Knudsen - (H) Committee of the Whole**

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1           ~~(2) — As proof of the existence of a common-law marriage contracted before [the effective date of~~  
2 ~~this act], the parties may file with the clerk of the district court in the county of the residence of the parties a~~  
3 ~~written declaration showing:~~

4           ~~(a) — the names, ages, and residence of the parties;~~

5           ~~(b) — the date on which the parties entered into a common-law marriage; and~~

6           ~~(c) — the notarized signatures of both parties.~~

7           ~~(3) — Declarations of marriage pursuant to 40-1-311 through 40-1-313, 40-1-323, and 40-1-324 are~~  
8 ~~not invalidated by this chapter.~~

9           ~~(4) — Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit a court from finding an equitable interest in~~  
10 ~~real or personal property between nonspousal partners."~~

11

12           NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

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