

55.201 Central database of judgment liens on personal property.

The Department of State shall maintain a database of judgment lien files established in accordance with ss. 55.201-55.209.

History. s. 8, ch. 2000-258; s. 1, ch. 2001-154.

55.202 Judgments, orders, and decrees; lien on personal property.

(1) A judgment lien securing the unpaid amount of any money judgment may be acquired by the holder of a judgment:

- (a) Enforceable in this state under its laws or the laws of the United States;
- (b) Entered by an issuing tribunal with respect to a support order being enforced in this state pursuant to chapter 88; or
- (c) Enforceable by operation of law pursuant to s. 61.14(6).

(2) A judgment lien may be acquired on a judgment debtor's interest in all personal property in this state subject to execution under s. 56.061, other than fixtures, money, negotiable instruments, and mortgages.

(a) A judgment lien is acquired by filing a judgment lien certificate in accordance with s. 55.203 with the Department of State after the judgment has become final and if the time to move for rehearing has lapsed, no motion for rehearing is pending, and no stay of the judgment or its enforcement is then in effect. A court may authorize, for cause shown, the filing of a judgment lien certificate before a judgment has become final when the court has authorized the issuance of a writ of execution in the same matter. A judgment lien certificate not filed in compliance with this subsection is permanently void and of no effect.

(b) For any lien, warrant, assessment, or judgment collected by the Department of Revenue, a judgment lien may be acquired by filing the judgment lien certificate information or warrant with the Department of State in accordance with subsection (5).

(c) Except as provided in s. 55.208, the effective date of a judgment lien is the date, including the time of day, of filing. Although no lien attaches to property, and a creditor does not become a lien creditor as to liens under chapter 679, until the debtor acquires an interest in the property, priority among competing judgment liens is determined in order of filing date and time.

(d) Except as provided in s. 55.204(3), a judgment creditor may file only one effective judgment lien certificate based upon a particular judgment.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in s. 55.208, the priority of a judgment lien acquired in accordance with this section or s. 55.204(3) is established at the date and time the judgment lien certificate is filed.

(4) As used in ss. 55.201-55.209, the terms "holder of a judgment" and "judgment creditor" include the Department of Revenue with respect to a judgment being enforced by the Department of Revenue as the state IV-D agency.

(5) Liens, assessments, warrants, or judgments filed pursuant to paragraph (2)(b) may be filed directly into the central database by the Department of Revenue, or its designee as determined by its executive director, through electronic or information data exchange programs approved by the Department of State. Such filings must contain the information set forth in s. 55.203(1).

History. s. 9, ch. 2000-258; s. 2, ch. 2001-154; s. 2, ch. 2002-218; s. 2, ch. 2005-241.

55.203 Judgment lien certificate; content, filing, and indexing.

(1) An original judgment lien certificate must include:

(a) The legal name of each judgment debtor and, if a recorded legal entity, the registered name and document filing number as shown in the records of the Department of State.

(b) The last known address and the social security number or federal employer identification number of each judgment debtor if shown on the judgment itself.

(c) The legal name of the judgment creditor and, if a recorded legal entity, the registered name and document filing number as shown in the records of the Department of State, and the name of the judgment creditor's attorney or duly authorized representative, if any.

(d) The address of the judgment creditor.

(e) The identity of the court which entered the judgment and the case number and the date the written judgment was entered.

(f) The amount due on the money judgment and the applicable interest rate.

(g) The signature of the judgment creditor or the judgment creditor's attorney or duly authorized representative.

(h) With respect to a lien acquired by a delivery of a writ of execution to a sheriff prior to October 1, 2001, an affidavit by the judgment creditor which attests that the person or entity possesses any documentary evidence of the date of delivery of the writ, and a statement of that date or a certification by the sheriff of the date as provided in ¹s. 30.17(4).

(2) A second judgment lien certificate, as provided in s. 55.204(3), must include the information required in subsection (1) and must state the file number assigned to the file of the original judgment lien certificate, the money amount remaining unpaid, and the interest accrued thereon.

(3) An amendment, as provided in s. 55.206, or a correction statement, as provided in s. 55.207, must state the file number of the judgment lien file to which the amendment or correction statement relates and must state the action, change, or statement to be added.

(4) The Department of State shall examine, for compliance with ss. 55.201-55.209, each document submitted for filing and shall accept or reject the document accordingly. For each judgment lien certificate filed, the department shall:

(a) Create a file.

(b) Assign a unique file number to the record.

(c) Include the date and time of filing of the judgment lien certificate.

(d) Maintain the file in a database accessible to the public via the Internet.

(e) Index the judgment lien certificate according to the name of each judgment debtor.

(f) Index all subsequently filed documents relating to an original judgment lien certificate in a manner that associates them to the original judgment lien certificate.

(5) A judgment lien certificate substantially satisfying the requirements of this section is effective even if it has minor errors or omissions that make the filing seriously misleading.

(6) The Department of State shall prescribe mandatory forms of all documents to be filed under this section.

History. s. 10, ch. 2000-258; s. 3, ch. 2001-154. ¹Note. Repealed by s. 5, ch. 2005-2.

55.204 Duration and continuation of judgment lien; destruction of records.

(1) Except as provided in this section, a judgment lien acquired under s. 55.202 lapses and becomes invalid 5 years after the date of filing the judgment lien certificate.

(2) Liens securing the payment of child support or tax obligations under s. 95.091(1)(b) lapse 20 years after the date of the original filing of the warrant or other document required by law to establish a lien. Liens securing the payment of unemployment tax obligations lapse 10 years after the date of the original filing of the notice of lien. A second lien based on the original filing may not be obtained.

(3) At any time within 6 months before or 6 months after the scheduled lapse of a judgment lien under subsection (1), the judgment creditor may acquire a second judgment lien by filing a new judgment lien certificate. The effective date of the second judgment lien is the date and time on which the judgment lien certificate is filed. The second judgment lien is a new judgment lien and not a continuation of the original judgment lien. The second judgment lien permanently lapses and becomes invalid 5 years after its filing date, and additional liens based on the original judgment or any judgment based on the original judgment may not be acquired.

(4) A judgment lien continues only as to itemized property for an additional 90 days after lapse of the lien. Such judgment lien continues only if:

(a) The property was itemized and its location described with sufficient particularity in the instructions for levy to permit the sheriff to act;

(b) The instructions for the levy had been delivered to the sheriff before the date of lapse of the lien; and

(c) The property was located in the county in which the sheriff has jurisdiction at the time of delivery of the instruction for levy. Subsequent removal of the property does not defeat the lien. A court may order continuation of the lien beyond the 90-day period on a showing that extraordinary circumstances have prevented levy.

(5) The date of lapse of a judgment lien whose enforceability has been temporarily stayed or enjoined as a result of any legal or equitable proceeding is tolled until 30 days after the stay or injunction is terminated.

(6) If a second judgment lien is not filed, the Department of State shall maintain each judgment lien file and all information contained therein for a minimum of 1 year after the judgment lien lapses in accordance with this section. If a second judgment lien is filed, the department shall maintain both files and all information contained in such files for a minimum of 1 year after the second judgment lien lapses.

(7) This section does not extend the life of a judgment lien beyond the time that the underlying judgment, order, decree, or warrant otherwise expires or becomes invalid pursuant to law.

History. s. 11, ch. 2000-258; s. 4, ch. 2001-154; s. 3, ch. 2005-241; s. 3, ch. 2010-90; s. 1, ch. 2010-138.

55.205 Effect of judgment lien.

(1) A judgment creditor who has not acquired a judgment lien as provided in s. 55.202 or whose lien has lapsed may nevertheless proceed against the judgment debtor's property through any appropriate judicial process. Such judgment creditor proceeding by writ of execution acquires a lien as of the time of levy and only on the property levied upon. Except as provided in s. 55.208, such judgment creditor takes subject to the claims and interest of priority judgment creditors.

(2) A buyer in the ordinary course of business as defined in s. 671.201(9) takes free of a judgment lien acquired as provided in s. 55.202 or s. 55.204 even though the buyer knows of its existence. A valid security interest as defined in chapter 679 in after-acquired property of the judgment debtor which is perfected before the debtor acquires an interest in the property takes priority over the judgment lien on the after-acquired property.

(3) An individual buyer of goods for personal, family, or household use who buys the goods from a seller who held the goods for personal, family, or household use, and who pays value without knowledge that the goods are subject to a judgment lien, is entitled, to the extent of the value paid, to a lien on the goods superior to the judgment lien. If the buyer has made improvements to the goods, or other reasons justify doing so, a court may adjust the amount secured by the lien as the equities may require. This subsection shall not apply to:

(a) A transfer to a relative or an insider of the judgment debtor, as such are defined at s. 726.102;

(b) A fraudulent transfer, as defined by s. 726.105, s. 726.106, or 11 U.S.C. s. 548;

(c) A fraudulent asset conversion as defined by s. 222.30;

(d) Twenty-five percent of the transfer of goods by a judgment debtor the value of which, in the aggregate, exceeds \$10,000;

(e) Fifty percent of the transfer of goods by a judgment debtor the value of which, in the aggregate, exceeds \$20,000;

(f) Seventy-five percent of the transfer of goods by a judgment debtor the value of which, in the aggregate, exceeds \$25,000; or

(g) Any transfer of goods by a judgment debtor the value of which, in the aggregate, exceeds \$30,000.

(4) A buyer of stock in a corporation takes free of a judgment lien hereunder if the buyer pays value in good faith without notice as defined in s. 678.1051.

History. s. 12, ch. 2000-258; s. 5, ch. 2001-154; s. 4, ch. 2005-241.

55.206 Amendment of judgment lien file; termination, partial release, assignment, continuation, tolling, correction.

(1) An amendment to a judgment lien acquired as provided under s. 55.202 may be filed by or on behalf of the judgment creditor of record, which may provide for:

(a) The termination, partial release, or assignment of the judgment creditor's interest in a judgment lien;

(b) The continuation and termination of the continuation of a judgment lien, as provided in s. 55.204(4);

(c) The tolling and termination of the tolling of a lapse of a judgment lien, as provided in s. 55.204(5); or

(d) The correction or change of any other information provided in the judgment lien file.

(2) Within 30 days following receipt of a written demand by a judgment debtor after the obligation underlying a judgment lien has been fully or partially released, the judgment lienholder must deliver to the judgment debtor a written statement indicating that there is no longer a claim for a lien on the personal property of the judgment debtor or that the judgment lien has been partially released and setting forth the value of the lien remaining unpaid as of the date of the statement. A statement signed by an assignee must include or be accompanied by a separate written acknowledgment of assignment signed by or for

the benefit of the judgment creditor of record. If the judgment lienholder fails to deliver such a statement within 30 days after proper written demand therefor, the judgment lienholder is liable to the judgment debtor for \$100, and for any actual or consequential damages, including reasonable attorney's fees, caused by such failure to the judgment debtor. The judgment debtor, the judgment creditor, or assignee may file such statement with the Department of State.

History. s. 13, ch. 2000-258; s. 6, ch. 2001-154.

55.207 Correction of judgment lien file.

(1) A person may file with the Department of State a correction statement with respect to a judgment lien file, as provided in s. 55.203, indexed under any person's name, if the person believes that the file is inaccurate or that the judgment lien certificate was wrongfully filed.

(2) A correction statement must:

(a) State the judgment debtor named and the file number assigned to the judgment lien file to which the correction statement relates;

(b) Indicate that it is a correction statement;

(c) Provide the basis for the person's belief that the judgment lien certificate was wrongfully filed or the file is inaccurate; and

(d) Indicate the manner in which the person believes the file should be corrected to cure any inaccuracy.

(3) The department shall ensure that a correction statement is indexed and available in the same manner as any filed lien certificate in the central database of judgment lien files.

(4) The filing of a correction statement does not affect the effectiveness of the judgment lien or other filing.

History. s. 14, ch. 2000-258; s. 7, ch. 2001-154.

55.208 Effect of filed judgment lien on writs of execution previously delivered to a sheriff.

(1) Any lien created by a writ of execution which has been delivered to the sheriff of any county before October 1, 2001, remains in effect for 2 years thereafter as to any property of the judgment debtor located in that county before October 1, 2001, and remaining within that county after that date. As to any property of the judgment debtor brought into the county on or after October 1, 2001, such writs create no lien, inchoate or otherwise.

(2) If a judgment creditor who has delivered a writ of execution to a sheriff in any county prior to October 1, 2001, properly files a judgment lien certificate with the Department of State by October 1, 2003, the resulting judgment lien is deemed filed on the date the writ was delivered to the sheriff as to all property of the judgment debtor subject to execution in this state under s. 56.061 which is located in that county on October 1, 2001, and that remains continuously in that county thereafter. Priority of such judgment liens is determined as of the effective date they are considered to have been filed. As to all other property of the judgment debtor, the effective date of the judgment lien is as provided in s. 55.202. The duration of all judgment liens is as provided in s. 55.204.

(3) If a judgment creditor who has delivered a writ of execution to a sheriff in any county before October 1, 2001, does not properly file a judgment lien certificate with the Department of State by October 1, 2003, such writ is considered to have been abandoned and to be of no effect after October 1, 2003.

History. s. 15, ch. 2000-258; s. 8, ch. 2001-154.

55.209 Department of State; processing fees, responsibilities.

(1) Except for liens, assessments, warrants, or judgments filed electronically as provided in s. 55.202(2)(b), the Department of State shall collect the following nonrefundable processing fees for all documents filed in accordance with ss. 55.201-55.209:

- (a) For any judgment lien certificate or other documents permitted to be filed, \$20.
- (b) For the certification of any filed document, \$10.
- (c) For copies of judgment lien documents which are produced by the Department of State, \$1 per page or part thereof. However, no charge may be collected for copies provided in an online electronic format via the Internet.
- (d) For indexing a judgment lien by multiple judgment debtor names, \$5 per additional name.
- (e) For each additional facing page attached to a judgment lien certificate or document permitted to be filed, \$5.

(2) Unless otherwise provided by law, the Department of State may not conduct any search of the database established under s. 55.201 to determine the existence of any judgment lien file or to perform any service other than in connection with those services for which payment of services are required under this section. The information maintained in the database is for public notice purposes only and the department may make no certification or determination of the validity of any judgment lien acquired under ss. 55.202 and 55.204(3).

History. s. 16, ch. 2000-258; s. 14, ch. 2001-60; s. 9, ch. 2001-154.