

*{As Amended by Senate Committee of the Whole}*

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*Session of 2026*

**SENATE BILL No. 480**

By Committee on Judiciary

2-4

1 AN ACT concerning probate; relating to estates of absentees; reviving and  
2 amending K.S.A. 59-2701, 59-2702, 59-2703, 59-2704, 59-2705, 59-  
3 2707 and 59-2708 and repealing the revived sections.  
4

5 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

6 Section 1. K.S.A. 59-2701 is hereby revived and amended to read as  
7 follows: 59-2701. (a) The district courts shall have jurisdiction to  
8 administer, in accordance with the provisions of ~~this~~ *K.S.A. 59-2701*  
9 *through 59-2705 and 59-2707, and amendments thereto*, the property  
10 within this state of ~~(a)~~:

11 (1) Any person who has disappeared and remains unheard from by  
12 the persons most likely to hear from ~~him or her, such person;~~ or ~~(b)~~

13 (2) any person who is reported by the United States department of  
14 defense to be a prisoner of war or missing in action.

15 (b) The word "absentee" as used in ~~this~~ *K.S.A. 59-2701 through*  
16 *59-2705 and 59-2707, and amendments thereto*, shall refer to such a  
17 person.

18 Sec. 2. K.S.A. 59-2702 is hereby revived and amended to read as  
19 follows: 59-2702. (a) A trustee may be appointed for the estate of any ~~such~~  
20 ~~absentee to administer the same such estate~~ until such ~~time as he or she~~  
21 ~~absentee~~ returns or is found to be dead in accordance with ~~the subsequent~~  
22 ~~provisions hereof K.S.A. 59-2701 through 59-2705 and 59-2707, and~~  
23 ~~amendments thereto~~. A petition for the appointment of such trustee may be  
24 filed by any person. Venue for the proceedings ~~thereon on such petition~~  
25 shall be in accordance with the laws applicable to the appointment of  
26 conservators for nonresident's proposed conservatees. The petition shall  
27 include:

28 (1) The name, age, and the last known residence of the ~~absentee~~;

29 (2) the fact of the ~~absentee's~~ disappearance and all known  
30 circumstances pertaining thereto, including the date and place of ~~his or her~~  
31 *the absentee's* last known whereabouts;

32 (3) the names and addresses of ~~his or her~~ *the absentee's* known next  
33 of kin and spouse, if any;

34 (4) the names and addresses of any other known persons who are  
35 likely to hear from the ~~absentee~~; and

36 (5) the general nature and probable value of ~~his or her~~ *the absentee's*

1 real and personal property.

2       (b) Notice of the filing of the petition and of the hearing ~~thereon on~~ *on*  
3 ~~such petition~~ shall be given in accordance with K.S.A. 59-2209 ~~to through~~  
4 59-2211, ~~inclusive and amendments thereto~~, and copies ~~thereof of such~~  
5 ~~petition shall be mailed to said the~~ next of kin, spouse if any, and the ~~said~~  
6 other persons likely to hear from the absentee as shown by the petition.  
7 Upon the hearing the court shall appoint a trustee if satisfied of the truth of  
8 the allegations of the petition and that there is property of the absentee  
9 within the state subject to being lost or dissipated unless a trustee is  
10 appointed to manage and conserve ~~the same such property~~.

11 Sec. 3. K.S.A. 59-2703 is hereby revived and amended to read as  
12 follows: 59-2703. The provisions of the laws applicable to the oath, bond,  
13 inventory, accountings, debts, liabilities, powers, duties and discharge of  
14 conservators shall govern in the administration and management of the  
15 estates of such absentees and the trustees ~~thereof of such estates~~.

16 Sec. 4. K.S.A. 59-2704 is hereby revived and amended to read as  
17 follows: 59-2704. (a) An absentee shall be presumed to be dead for the  
18 purposes of ~~this act~~ *K.S.A. 59-2701 through 59-2705 and 59-2707, and*  
19 *amendments thereto*, if:

20       (1) The absentee ~~shall remain~~ *remains* unheard from by those persons  
21 most likely to hear from such absentee for a period of not less than five  
22 years; and

23       (2) one or more persons who had a bona fide motive for locating the  
24 absentee have conducted a diligent search for the absentee in all places  
25 where such absentee's presence could reasonably be expected.

26       (b) If no such search has been made with reference to an absentee  
27 who has been unheard from for more than five years and for whose estate  
28 a trustee has been appointed in accordance with ~~this act~~ *K.S.A. 59-2701*  
29 *through 59-705; 59-2705} and 59-2707, and amendments thereto*, the  
30 district court may on the court's own motion order the trustee to conduct  
31 such search under the direction of the court and pay the reasonable  
32 expenses ~~thereof for such search~~ out of the estate.

33       (c) Absentees missing as a result of a catastrophic event or disaster  
34 shall be presumed dead under K.S.A. 59-2708, and amendments thereto.

35 Sec. 5. K.S.A. 59-2705 is hereby revived and amended to read as  
36 follows: 59-2705. (a) At any time, upon petition signed by the absentee or  
37 on a petition of an attorney-in-fact acting upon an adequate power of  
38 attorney granted by the absentee, the court shall declare the absentee alive  
39 and order the state registrar to rescind the presumptive death certificate  
40 and direct the termination of the trust estate and the transfer of all property  
41 held ~~thereunder under such trust estate~~ to the absentee or to the designated  
42 attorney-in-fact.

43       (b) Upon the petition of any person interested in the estate of an

1      absentee presumed to be dead, and on proof thereof in addition to all other  
2      matters required by law to be proved for the appointment of an  
3      administrator or executor, the district court shall proceed to administer the  
4      estate of such absentee as if such absentee was known to have died on the  
5      date of the filing of such petition.

6            (c) Upon petition of any person interested in the estate of any person  
7      reported by the United States department of defense as missing in action  
8      for over three years, the district court, upon proof that such person has  
9      been reported as missing in action for over three years, shall proceed to  
10     terminate the trust estate of such absentee in the same manner as the final  
11     settlement of a decedent's estate. The district court shall proceed to  
12     administer the estate of such absentee as if such absentee was known to  
13     have died on the date of the filing of such petition, but the district court  
14     shall not declare the absentee to be deceased.

15            (d) All laws now or hereafter enacted for the administration of estates  
16     of known decedents shall be applicable to absentees declared  
17     presumptively dead under K.S.A. 59-2708, and amendments thereto, and  
18     subsection (b) ~~of this section~~, except:

19            (1) No administrator, executor or personal representative of such  
20     absentee shall make a final distribution of the assets of such estate until the  
21     expiration of three years after the date of presumptive death, ~~provided~~  
22     *except* that assets in the estate of such absentee ~~which~~ that are exempt  
23     from attachment by creditors, including moneys paid by the United States  
24     of such nature and other assets of any such estate ~~which~~ that would  
25     otherwise be available for the support of the spouse, children and other  
26     dependents of such absentee, if such absentee were alive, after allowance  
27     for debts and costs of administration, may be paid for the support of the  
28     spouse and children and dependents of such absentee upon order of the  
29     court until such time as distribution may be made or administration  
30     terminated. If the absentee has not appeared after the period of three years  
31     the court's finding shall become effective to permit final distribution of  
32     such person's estate.

33            (2) Upon final settlement of the absentee's estate the provisions of  
34     subsection (e) shall apply.

35            (e) All laws now or hereafter enacted for the administration of estates  
36     of known decedents shall be applicable to the settlement of estates  
37     authorized by subsections (b), (c) and (d) except:

38            (1) If such absentee ~~should return~~ *returns* within five years after entry  
39     of the order of final settlement, any order made during such administration  
40     shall be subject to being set aside on such absentee's application for good  
41     cause shown and filed within three months after such absentee learned, or  
42     reasonably could have learned of such order; ~~but~~. Setting aside any such  
43     order shall not prejudice the rights of any person who has acquired an

1 interest in any property for value, or of any trustee, executor or  
2 administrator who has acted in good faith in accordance with the  
3 provisions of ~~this act~~ *K.S.A. 59-2701 through 59-2705 and 59-2707, and*  
4 *amendments thereto.*

5 (2) No distributee of a share or interest in the estate shall receive or  
6 be assigned ~~the same such share or interest~~ on final settlement until such  
7 distributee ~~shall have~~ *has* filed a bond conditioned that if such absentee  
8 ~~shall return~~ *returns* within five years ~~from after~~ receipt or assignment of  
9 ~~the same and make such share or interest and makes a~~ claim thereto, such  
10 property, or the reasonable value thereof if it has been disposed of,  
11 together with the net income therefrom, shall be returned to the absentee.  
12 The court may require sureties on such bond, ~~which and such~~ sureties shall  
13 be subject to the approval of the court. No action shall be brought on such  
14 bond more than one year after the absentee learned of such distribution nor  
15 in any event more than six years after the date of such distribution.

16 Sec. 6. *K.S.A. 59-2707 is hereby revived and amended to read as*  
17 *follows: 59-2707. This act*~~K.S.A. 59-2701 through 59-2705 and 59-2707,~~  
18 *and amendments thereto, shall be and construed as* a part of and  
19 supplemental to the Kansas probate code.

20 Sec. 7. *K.S.A. 59-2708 is hereby revived and amended to read as*  
21 *follows: 59-2708. (a) In cases of catastrophic events, disasters, states of*  
22 *emergency or states of war emergency, the death of persons whose bodies*  
23 *could not be found or identified shall be established according to the*  
24 *following procedure:*

25 (1) The governor or president of the United States or both shall have  
26 declared a state of emergency or state of war emergency.

27 (2) An absentee shall be presumed dead immediately after the  
28 catastrophic event if:

29 (A) The absentee's body could not be recovered due to the nature of  
30 the catastrophic event; and

31 (B) evidence presented to a court of proper jurisdiction places the  
32 absentee at the site of the catastrophic event on the date and at the time of  
33 the event.

34 (3) Upon a finding of presumptive death, the district court shall order  
35 the coroner in the county ~~in which~~ *where* death occurred to prepare a death  
36 certificate with the cause of death identified as due to the catastrophic  
37 event in accordance with *K.S.A. 65-2412(c) and 65-2414, and*  
38 *amendments thereto.*

39 (4) Upon receipt of the death certificate the office of vital statistics  
40 shall register and make available for issuance certified copies of the death  
41 certificate in accordance with *K.S.A. 65-2401 et seq., and amendments*  
42 *thereto.*

43 (5) If pertinent new information is received by the court, pursuant to a

1 court order, the presumptive death certificate may be amended in  
2 accordance with K.S.A. 65-2422c, *and amendments thereto*. In a case  
3 where the absentee is found to be alive, the presumptive death certificate  
4 shall be rescinded.

5 (6) The secretary of the department of health and environment may  
6 by rule and regulation prescribe forms and procedures to implement the  
7 provisions of this ~~act~~ *section and K.S.A. 59-2704 and 59-2705, and*  
8 *amendments thereto*.

9 (b) For the purposes of this ~~act~~ *section and K.S.A. 59-2704 and 59-*  
10 *2705, and amendments thereto*:

11 (1) "Catastrophic event" means a disaster that will require massive  
12 state or federal assistance, or both, including immediate military  
13 involvement.

14 (2) "Disaster" means any natural, technological or civil emergency  
15 that causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to result in a  
16 declaration of a state of emergency by the governor or president of the  
17 United States or a state of war emergency by the president of the United  
18 States.

19 (3) "State of emergency" means the declaration of the existence of  
20 conditions of disaster, catastrophe or extreme peril to the safety of persons  
21 or property within the state caused by air or water pollution, fire, flood,  
22 storm, epidemic, earthquake, resource shortages or other natural or man-  
23 made conditions other than conditions causing a "state of war emergency",  
24 which conditions by reasons of their magnitude are or are likely to be  
25 beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of  
26 any single county or municipality, or both, and requires combined forces  
27 of the state to combat.

28 (4) "State of war emergency" means the condition which exists  
29 immediately, with or without a declaration by the governor, whenever this  
30 state or nation is attacked by an enemy of the United States or upon receipt  
31 by the state of a warning from the federal government indicating an action  
32 against persons or society including but not limited to, emergency attack,  
33 sabotage, terrorism, civil unrest or other action impairing the orderly  
34 administration of government is probable or imminent.

35 Sec. 8. K.S.A. 59-2701, as revived by section 1 of this act, 59-2702,  
36 as revived by section 2 of this act, 59-2703, as revived by section 3 of this  
37 act, 59-2704, as revived by section 4 of this act, 59-2705, as revived by  
38 section 5 of this act, 59-2707, as revived by section 6 of this act, and 59-  
39 2708, as revived by section 7 of this act, are hereby repealed.

40 Sec. 9. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its  
41 publication in the Kansas register.