

**Sixty-third Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 8, 2013**

HOUSE BILL NO. 1417
(Representatives Klemin, Hogan, Kretschmar)
(Senators Sitte, Sorvaag, Unruh)

AN ACT to amend and reenact sections 27-08.1-01 and 27-08.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to limits on small claims court actions.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Section 27-08.1-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

27-08.1-01. Small claims court - Jurisdictional limits - Venue.

1. All judges of the district courts may exercise the jurisdiction conferred by this chapter, and while sitting in the exercise of that jurisdiction must be known and referred to as the "small claims court". The jurisdiction of this court is confined to cases for recovery of money, or the cancellation of any agreement involving material fraud, deception, misrepresentation, or false promise, when the value of the agreement or the amount claimed by the plaintiff or the defendant does not exceed ~~ten~~fifteen thousand dollars.
2. The proceedings in this court must be commenced:
 - a. If the defendant is a corporation, limited liability company, or a partnership, in any county in which the defendant has a place of business or in any county in which the subject matter of the claim occurred.
 - b. If the claim is for collection of a check written without sufficient funds or without an account, in the county where the check was passed, or in the county of the defendant's residence or place of business.
 - c. If the defendant is an individual and the claim is for collection of an open account on which credit has been extended:
 - (1) In the county of the defendant's residence or place of business; or
 - (2) If the amount of the claim is less than one thousand dollars and is not from a telephone or mail order transaction, in the county where the transaction occurred or in the county of the defendant's residence or place of business.
 - d. If the defendant is an individual and the claim is not made under subdivision b or c, in the county of the defendant's residence.
 - e. If the defendant is an individual and the claim arose as the result of the defendant's lease of real property, in the county where the defendant resides or in the county where the real property is located.
 - f. If the plaintiff is a political subdivision and the claim is for a public utility debt, in the county in which the political subdivision is located.
3. Except for an action under subdivision c, e, or f of subsection 2, the defendant may elect to remove the action to a small claims court in the defendant's county of residence. A claim may not be filed by an assignee of that claim. A garnishment or attachment may not issue from this court until after judgment is entered.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT. Section 27-08.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

27-08.1-03. Informal hearing - Answer and counterclaim - Filing and service fees - Examination of debtor.

No formal pleadings other than the claim affidavit and order for appearance may be required, and the hearing and disposition of actions must be informal. A court reporter is not required to be present to take the testimony unless arranged for and paid for by one of the parties to the action. The defendant may file an answer, and file a claim affidavit setting forth any new matter constituting a counterclaim, not to exceed ~~ten~~fifteen thousand dollars, which must be served upon the plaintiff by a person of legal age, not a party to or interested in the action, or mailed to the plaintiff by certified mail, not later than forty-eight hours before the hearing set for the appearance of the defendant. The compulsory counterclaim rule does not apply to counterclaims in excess of ~~ten~~fifteen thousand dollars. At the hearing, the plaintiff and the defendant may appear without counsel. The court will conduct the proceedings and may make its own inquiry before, during, or after the hearing. After the court has found that money is owing by any party to the proceeding, the court may, in the presence of the prevailing party, inquire of the debtor as to plans for payment of the debt. The court may examine the debtor concerning the property owned by the debtor, at the hearing, as would be made under chapter 28-25. The examination may be made without first having issued an execution against the property of the debtor and without further notice as otherwise provided in chapter 28-25. A trial by jury is not allowed in small claims court. A fee as prescribed in subdivision c of subsection 1 of section 27-05.2-03 must be charged for filing the claim affidavit.

Speaker of the House

President of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

Secretary of the Senate

This certifies that the within bill originated in the House of Representatives of the Sixty-third Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as House Bill No. 1417.

House Vote: Yeas 88 Nays 0 Absent 6

Senate Vote: Yeas 47 Nays 0 Absent 0

Chief Clerk of the House

Received by the Governor at _____ M. on _____, 2013.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 2013.

Governor

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 2013,

at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State