
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6665

AN ACT CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS BASED ON RACE AND ELIMINATION OF THE RACE DESIGNATION ON MARRIAGE LICENSES.

SUMMARY

This bill voids “unlawful restrictive covenants,” which are covenants or provisions in instruments affecting the title to real property that purport to restrict ownership or occupancy based on race. The bill does not affect any other property covenant or provision or its validity, as long as it is not unlawfully restrictive.

The bill requires town clerks, after receiving a form or affidavit notifying them of an unlawful restrictive covenant, to record it and to the extent practicable notate the land records. The bill correspondingly requires the Office of Policy and Management, by December 1, 2021, to develop a standardized form to report unlawful restrictive covenants to town clerks, and makes a conforming change allowing the affidavits. Under the bill, each town clerk must (1) make the form available on the municipality’s website and in the town clerk’s office where land records are kept and (2) post a notice informing the public of the bill’s provisions in the town clerk’s land records office.

By law, marriage licenses must include certain demographic information on the applicants (i.e., the people getting married). The bill removes “race” as one of those categories (§ 3).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021, except the marriage license provisions are effective October 1, 2021.

§§ 1 & 2 – UNLAWFUL RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Recording in Land Records

Under the bill, a real property owner who identifies an unlawful restrictive covenant in an instrument recorded on the land records may

file a form or affidavit identifying it with a town clerk. The affidavit or form must:

1. be in the form existing law requires of other affidavits relating to land titles,
2. identify the land record volume and page that the instrument containing the unlawful covenant is on; and
3. state the affidavit or form is being filed in accordance with the bill.

To the extent practicable, a town clerk receiving one of these forms or affidavits must notate the indices to the land records to reflect the covenant's invalidity. Under the bill, the town clerk is prohibited from assessing a recording fee for this.

An unlawful restrictive covenant is invalid under the bill regardless of whether a property owner files the form or affidavit described above.

Additionally, the bill deems that any references to an unlawful restrictive covenant in recorded instruments do not constitute its revival, reinstatement, or republication. This applies to instruments affecting real title or any other documents affecting land records, including reports, opinions, contracts, or insurance policies. An affidavit or form recorded under the bill's provision does not encumber the property.

Liability

A town clerk or municipality is not liable under the bill for any damages resulting from recording an affidavit or form unauthorized under the bill's provisions. The bill instead makes any liability from an unauthorized recording the sole responsibility of the person who caused the affidavit or form to be recorded.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 38 Nay 0 (04/06/2021)