

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1251**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Kenneth J. Donnelly***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to reform sheriff civil process operations.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Kenneth J. Donnelly</i>	<i>Fourth Middlesex</i>
<i>David T. Vieira</i>	<i>3rd Barnstable</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>
<i>Randy Hunt</i>	<i>5th Barnstable</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1251**

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By Mr. Donnelly, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1251) of Kenneth J. Donnelly, David T. Vieira, Michael O. Moore and Randy Hunt for legislation to to reform sheriff civil process operations. Public Safety and Homeland Security.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 1129 OF 2013-2014.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act to reform sheriff civil process operations.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 32 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2012  
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting, in line 259, at the end of the definition  
3 “Employee”, the following text:-

4           ““Employee”, as applied to persons whose regular compensation is paid from an account  
5 established by the sheriff’s civil process office pursuant to section 22 of Chapter 37 of this act  
6 for the sheriff’s civil process office and shall mean any person who is appointed by the sheriff as  
7 a deputy sheriff or employee of the sheriff’s civil process office who is engaged in duties which  
8 require that his time be devoted to the service of the sheriff’s civil process office in each year  
9 during the ordinary working hours of regular and permanent employees, and who is regularly

10 and permanently employed in such service and receives a salary, hourly wage or regular  
11 compensation for assigned civil process duties as determined by each Sheriff.”

12 SECTION 2. Section 3 of said chapter 32 , as so appearing , is hereby amended by  
13 inserting, in line 300, after the words “county correction facilities,” the following: - “and any  
14 deputy engaged in civil process enforcement activities that involve the acts of arrest, eviction or  
15 seizure of property, who is regularly assigned to such enforcement duties for more than 20 hours  
16 per week, and who is defined by section 3A of chapter 37 as a full-time employee of the Sheriff.”

17 SECTION 3. Section 3 of said chapter 32, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
18 inserting after subparagraph (a) the following paragraph: --

19 (b) any deputy sheriff or employee of the sheriff’s civil process office, including any  
20 deputy sheriff or employee of the process office that has been transferred to the Commonwealth,  
21 who is now a member or becomes a member of a system applicable to any governmental unit  
22 shall be given credit in such system for any service rendered by depositing in the annuity savings  
23 fund of such system such sums and under such conditions as are set forth under said section,  
24 provided that said member was eligible for membership in a retirement system based on his or  
25 her civil process duties for the period for which creditable service is being granted.

26 SECTION 3. Section 2 of chapter 32A, as so appearing, is amended by inserting, in line  
27 15, after the words “cooperative extension service of Suffolk county,” the following: - “the  
28 offices of the sheriffs,”

29 SECTION 4. Chapter 37 is hereby amended by inserting after section 3 the following  
30 sections:-

31 Section 3A. Sheriff's Civil Process Office.

32 (A) Each sheriff shall establish a civil process office within the sheriff's department and  
33 shall assign deputies appointed pursuant to section 3 who, along with the sheriff, shall serve and  
34 execute within their counties, including within the political boundaries of the previously  
35 abolished county governments, and where the Commonwealth is a party or interested, all  
36 precepts lawfully issued to them, and all other process required by law to be served by an officer  
37 pursuant to section 11 of chapter 37. The civil process office established within the sheriff's  
38 department shall be the exclusive entity performing sheriff's civil process duties under section 11  
39 of chapter 37. A deputy assigned to serve process may do so in cases in which a county, city,  
40 town, parish, religious society, fire or other district is a party or interested, although he is an  
41 inhabitant or member thereof. The sheriff may also appoint employees to work in the sheriff's  
42 civil process office. All deputies and employees of the process office shall serve at the will and  
43 the pleasure of the sheriff. Any deputy who ceases to be assigned to or to perform civil process  
44 duties, either as an employee or as a contracted deputized process server, shall be  
45 decommissioned as a deputy as provided by law and shall immediately return all equipment and  
46 property issued to him by the sheriffs' department.

47 (B) Deputies and other employees of the process office, who are salaried or hourly  
48 employees and who devote 20 or more hours per week to assigned duties, shall be state  
49 employees for the purposes of Chapters 32, 32A, 150E, 152, 258, 268A, and 268B, and shall be  
50 compensated in accordance with this subsection and subsection (C) of this section.

51 (C) Subject to the following limitations, the sheriff shall have power and authority as  
52 employer in all matters related to civil process deputies and employees including, but not limited

53 to, hiring, firing, promotion, discipline, work-related injuries and internal organization of the  
54 department:-

55 1. No sheriff, deputy or employee shall serve process for anyone except the Sheriff.

56 2. The sheriff or an assigned deputy, or contracted deputized process server may serve  
57 process outside regular business hours.

58 3. Sheriffs and non-commission full-time deputies and employees may receive only a  
59 salary or hourly wage, and shall at no time receive a commission, or any portion of any fee, for  
60 service of process no matter when the service is performed.

61 4. Except for contracted deputized process servers, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and  
62 employees who are part-time shall not be paid a commission or any portion of any fee, for  
63 service of process performed during hours for which the sheriff, deputy or employee is being  
64 compensated by federal, state, county or municipal funds;

65 5. The annual salary, cumulative hourly wage, commissions, or the cumulative portion of  
66 any fees for service of process, of any individual deputy, employee, or contracted deputized  
67 process server shall not exceed the annual salary of the sheriff; and

68 (D) In addition to any other training and certification required by law, any deputy sheriff  
69 who perform civil process duties, including but not limited to enforcement duties, shall be sworn  
70 and shall complete a civil process officers certification program, pursuant to a policy and  
71 curriculum that shall be adopted and approved by the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association and  
72 the Massachusetts Deputy Sheriffs Association. The civil process officers certification program  
73 shall include training and orientation on all requirements of lawful service of process and shall

74 be conducted jointly by the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association and the Massachusetts Deputy  
75 Sheriffs Association. Deputy sheriffs shall begin the civil process officers certification program  
76 within 30 days after receiving appointment or being assigned civil process duties, and shall be re-  
77 certified annually after completing the program.

78 (E) All full time deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office,  
79 including those deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who have been  
80 transferred to the commonwealth, and who completed a one year probationary period of full time  
81 employment, will be granted under this subsection, without impairment, full benefits for vacation  
82 and sick time earned from their original commencement of employment in the sheriff's civil  
83 process office, but not to exceed those of regular state employees.

84 Section 3B. Property Rights of Sheriffs, Deputy Sheriff and Employees.

85 No sheriff, deputy or employee, nor any other individual or entity shall have or acquire  
86 any legal right whatsoever to the tangible or intangible property of the civil process office, nor  
87 any revenue derived from fees collected from the service of process of any proceeds from the  
88 sale of the property within the process office, other than compensation as determined under this  
89 chapter.

90 Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, all fees derived from service of process  
91 shall be used solely for the operation of the sheriff's civil process office. All tangible and  
92 intangible property shall belong to the state and shall be under the sole possession and control of  
93 the sheriff.

94 SECTION 5. Chapter 37 is further amended by striking out section 11 and inserting in  
95 place thereof the following section:-

96 Section 11. Recording of Process.

97 (A) The Massachusetts Sheriffs Association, shall establish a system by which all process  
98 fees are reported and recorded and shall develop and adopt policies and procedures, to be  
99 approved by the comptroller and the office of administration and finance which shall be  
100 referenced in an internal control plan kept by each sheriff's office. Information about each  
101 request for process to be served that is received by the sheriff's civil process office shall be  
102 reported and recorded in the system within 30 days of when the information becomes available,  
103 and shall include but not be limited to the following information for each piece of process to be  
104 served: --

105 (a) the title of the action, including court name and docket number;

106 (b) the date the process was issued or required to be served;

107 (c) the type of process;

108 (d) the name and address of the person requesting that process be served;

109 (e) the name and address of the person or location upon which service is to be made;

110 (f) the fee charged;

111 (g) the date of billing to collect the fee;

112 (h) the date of fee collected;

113 (i) the date service was made;

114 (j) the manner of service;

115 (k) the amount of commission paid, if any ; and

116 (l) the name of the person performing service, and if different, the name of the person or  
117 entity to whom the commission was paid.

118 (B) A summary of the information contained in subsection (A) of this section shall be  
119 compiled and reported in writing to the comptroller and the office of administration and finance  
120 by the sheriff annually no later than September 30th.

121 (C) Administrative costs associated with the recording of information prescribed under  
122 subsection (A) of this section, and prepared under subsection (B) of this section, including  
123 expenditures for personnel or the purchase of equipment required to perform the recording of  
124 information, may be paid from the civil process account or any other account established for the  
125 operation of the sheriff's office.

126 (D) In addition to the requirements of subsection (A) of this section, annual reports filed  
127 pursuant to subsection (B) of this section shall include, but not be limited to, completed, itemized  
128 schedules of the following information pertaining to the service of process:

129 (a) assets, including cash, deposits, accounts receivable, and the value of the property and  
130 equipment;

131 (b) liabilities, including accounts payable, client escrow deposits, capital lease  
132 obligations, and all other debts;

133 (c) income derived from the service of process and otherwise;

134 (d) expenses paid, including payroll, commissions, and all other expenses; and



135 (e) any surplus from the sheriff's civil process account that has been transferred to an  
136 account as authorized by law.

137 SECTION 6. Section 14 of chapter 37, as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition , is  
138 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1 and 2, the words "They may execute precepts in their  
139 hands at the time of their removal from office; and,".

140 SECTION 7. Chapter 37 is further amended by inserting after section 14 the following  
141 new section: -

142 Section 14 A. Return of Writs and Precepts after removal.

143 Upon the removal of a deputy sheriff by the sheriff, the removed deputy shall  
144 immediately return to the sheriff's civil process office all process and other documents received  
145 or in his possession, along with any fees collected. If a deputy or former deputy fails to comply  
146 with the terms of this section, the sheriff shall institute legal proceedings to enforce the terms of  
147 this section or any other section herein.

148 SECTION 8. Chapter 37 is further amended by striking section 22 in its entirety and  
149 inserting in place thereof the following section: -

150 Section 22. Accounting of fees; disposition of funds.

151 Each sheriff shall keep an account of all fees and money received from any source by  
152 virtue of his office on the state's accounting system as prescribed by the state comptroller.

153 SECTION 9. Chapter 37 is further amended by inserting after section 22 the following  
154 section: —

155 Section 23. Fees from Process Office.

156 (A) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 22 of this chapter or the provisions of  
157 chapter 35, all fees and other revenues collected by the process office shall be revenue of the  
158 Commonwealth as defined by chapter 29. All fees and revenues shall be deposited in bank  
159 accounts and accounted for on the books and records of the Commonwealth in accordance with  
160 policies and procedures of the state treasurer and comptroller. The civil process accounts shall be  
161 kept separate from any other account, shall continue without further appropriation, and shall be  
162 used only for the operation of the process office or for activities that the sheriffs are statutorily  
163 authorized to perform. . Expenditures shall be authorized by the sheriff in accordance with state  
164 guidelines without further appropriation. Any balance in the account at the close of the fiscal  
165 year shall be retained in the account and made available in the subsequent fiscal year

166 (B) Payroll and all other bills of the civil process office shall be paid from the process  
167 account. However, after all civil process revenue has been expended for payroll and other bills of  
168 the civil process office, a sheriff may use funding from a fiscal year budgetary appropriation to  
169 pay payroll and all other civil process expenses.

170 (C) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), contributions from paychecks  
171 issued to deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who are members in  
172 service of the state retirement system, shall be deducted and forwarded to the state treasurer. The  
173 amounts deducted shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 32 and any  
174 other rules and regulations promulgated there under.

175 (D) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), premiums from paychecks of  
176 deputy sheriffs and employees of the sheriff's civil process office who are insured under Chapter

177 32A shall be deducted and forwarded to the state treasurer. The amounts deducted shall be  
178 determined in accordance with the provisions of those chapters and any other rules and  
179 regulations promulgated there under.

180 (E) Annually, on or before the 75th day after the close of the fiscal year, the sheriff shall  
181 render a sworn statement of account to the state treasurer, to the office of administration and  
182 finance and the house and senate committees on ways and means.

183 (F) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (A), no funds held in any civil process  
184 account shall be used either for payment of liability expenses incurred by the sheriff's civil  
185 process office pursuant to chapter 258, or for payments to employees pursuant to chapter 152.  
186 Any judgment, settlement or attorney's fees incurred as a result of litigation concerning the  
187 process office shall be paid in accordance with chapter 258, in the same manner as any other  
188 claim, judgment, settlement, or attorney's fees paid by the sheriff's office.

189 (G) If the sheriff projects that revenues collected from civil process fees will not be  
190 sufficient to cover costs, then 30 days in advance of the projected deficiency, the sheriff shall  
191 notify the house and senate committees on ways and means and the office of administration and  
192 finance in writing of the projected deficiency and the reasons for it.

193 SECTION 10. Chapter 126 is hereby amended by inserting after section 18A the  
194 following section: —

195 Section 18B. Injuries to Deputy Sheriffs and Employees of Sheriff's Civil Process Office.

196 Whenever a deputy sheriff or other employee of a sheriff's civil process office who, due  
197 to no fault of his own, while in the performance of duty, receives bodily injury from an act of

198 violence by a person connected with the proceeding for which service of process was attempted  
199 or served, and who is incapacitated for duty because of the injury sustained, shall be paid, in  
200 addition to benefits paid under chapter 152, the difference between the weekly cash benefits to  
201 which he is entitled under chapter 152 and his regular salary. Any absence from work due to the  
202 injury shall not be charged against the employee's available sick leave credits, even if the  
203 absence is for less than 8 calendar days. This section does not apply to injuries sustained during  
204 work for which a deputy or employee is being paid commission.

205 All amounts payable under this section shall be paid at the same times and in the same  
206 manner as, and for all purposes shall be deemed to be the deputy or employee's regular  
207 compensation. If a person or entity is liable for monetary damages for an injury of a deputy  
208 sheriff or other employee of a sheriff's civil process for which he is compensated under this  
209 section, the deputy, employee, or sheriff's department that is paying compensation under this  
210 section, may proceed to enforce the liability of such person or entity in any court of competent  
211 jurisdiction. Any sum recovered shall be for the benefit of the sheriff's department that is paying  
212 such compensation, unless the sum is greater than the compensation paid to the injured person, in  
213 which case the excess shall be retained by or paid to the injured person. For the purposes of this  
214 section, "excess" shall mean the amount by which the total sum received as damages for the  
215 injury, exclusive of interest and costs, exceeds the amount paid under this section as  
216 compensation to the injured person. The party bringing the action shall be entitled to any costs  
217 recovered by him. Any interest received in the action shall be apportioned between the sheriff's  
218 department and the injured person in proportion to the amounts received by them respectively,  
219 inclusive of interest and costs. The expense of any attorney's fees shall be divided between the

220 sheriff's department and the injured person in proportion to the amounts received by them  
221 respectively.

222 Any person or entity, who injures a deputy sheriff or other employee of a sheriff's civil  
223 process office who is compensated under this section for the injury, shall be liable in tort to the  
224 sheriff's department that is paying the injured person, for all costs, in excess of the amount of  
225 compensation paid, that are incurred by the sheriff's department to replace the injured person.

226 SECTION 11. Said chapter 262, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out  
227 section 8A and inserting in place thereof the following section;-

228 Section 8A. Annual accounts of deputy sheriffs and constables

229 Each constable shall annually, on or before the 15th day of April, file with the county  
230 treasurer an account signed by him under the penalties of perjury of all fees and money received  
231 by him under the provisions of section 8 for the service of civil process. If 2 or more constables  
232 share such fees and money between themselves, they may file a joint account provided that each  
233 signs the account under the penalties of perjury.

234 Each deputy sheriff shall annually, on or before 30 days after the close of the fiscal year,  
235 file with the sheriff and with the state treasurer an account signed by him under the penalties of  
236 perjury of all fees and money received by him under the provisions of section 8 for the service of  
237 civil process. If 2 or more deputy sheriffs share such fees and money between them they may  
238 file a joint account, provided that each shall sign the account under the penalties of perjury.

239 On a schedule determined by the sheriff, but at least quarterly, each deputy sheriff who  
240 serves process shall file a written report to the sheriff of all the process they have served. The

241 written report shall be in a form approved by the sheriff and shall contain all the information  
242 contained in section 11 of chapter 37. The written report shall be made under the pains and  
243 penalties of perjury.

244 SECTION12. The provisions of this act shall take effect January 1, 2016