

STATE OF NEW YORK

5998

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 25, 2021

Introduced by Sen. RITCHIE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the domestic relations law, in relation to determinations of child custody in matrimonial actions

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Section 70 of the domestic relations law is amended by
2 adding a new subdivision (c) to read as follows:

3 (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the
4 court shall not consider the deployment of a parent in active service of
5 the armed forces of the United States or of the organized militia of the
6 state of New York as a detrimental factor to the awarding of custody of
7 a child where a suitable child care plan for the period of such deploy-
8 ment has been presented to the court by the petitioning parent.

9 § 2. Paragraph (a) of subdivision 1 of section 240 of the domestic
10 relations law, as amended by chapter 567 of the laws of 2015, is amended
11 and a new subdivision 1-d is added to read as follows:

12 (a) In any action or proceeding brought (1) to annul a marriage or to
13 declare the nullity of a void marriage, or (2) for a separation, or (3)
14 for a divorce, or (4) to obtain, by a writ of habeas corpus or by peti-
15 tion and order to show cause, the custody of or right to visitation with
16 any child of a marriage, the court shall require verification of the
17 status of any child of the marriage with respect to such child's custody
18 and support, including any prior orders, and shall enter orders for
19 custody and support as, in the court's discretion, justice requires,
20 having regard to the circumstances of the case and of the respective
21 parties and to the best interests of the child and subject to the
22 provisions of [~~subdivision~~ subdivisions one-c and one-d of this
23 section. Where either party to an action concerning custody of or a
24 right to visitation with a child alleges in a sworn petition or
25 complaint or sworn answer, cross-petition, counterclaim or other sworn

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 responsive pleading that the other party has committed an act of domes-
2 tic violence against the party making the allegation or a family or
3 household member of either party, as such family or household member is
4 defined in article eight of the family court act, and such allegations
5 are proven by a preponderance of the evidence, the court must consider
6 the effect of such domestic violence upon the best interests of the
7 child, together with such other facts and circumstances as the court
8 deems relevant in making a direction pursuant to this section and state
9 on the record how such findings, facts and circumstances factored into
10 the direction. If a parent makes a good faith allegation based on a
11 reasonable belief supported by facts that the child is the victim of
12 child abuse, child neglect, or the effects of domestic violence, and if
13 that parent acts lawfully and in good faith in response to that reason-
14 able belief to protect the child or seek treatment for the child, then
15 that parent shall not be deprived of custody, visitation or contact with
16 the child, or restricted in custody, visitation or contact, based solely
17 on that belief or the reasonable actions taken based on that belief. If
18 an allegation that a child is abused is supported by a preponderance of
19 the evidence, then the court shall consider such evidence of abuse in
20 determining the visitation arrangement that is in the best interest of
21 the child, and the court shall not place a child in the custody of a
22 parent who presents a substantial risk of harm to that child, and shall
23 state on the record how such findings were factored into the determi-
24 nation. Where a proceeding filed pursuant to article ten or ten-A of the
25 family court act is pending at the same time as a proceeding brought in
26 the supreme court involving the custody of, or right to visitation with,
27 any child of a marriage, the court presiding over the proceeding under
28 article ten or ten-A of the family court act may jointly hear the dispo-
29 sitional hearing on the petition under article ten or the permanency
30 hearing under article ten-A of the family court act and, upon referral
31 from the supreme court, the hearing to resolve the matter of custody or
32 visitation in the proceeding pending in the supreme court; provided
33 however, the court must determine custody or visitation in accordance
34 with the terms of this section.

35 An order directing the payment of child support shall contain the
36 social security numbers of the named parties. In all cases there shall
37 be no prima facie right to the custody of the child in either parent.
38 Such direction shall make provision for child support out of the proper-
39 ty of either or both parents. The court shall make its award for child
40 support pursuant to subdivision one-b of this section. Such direction
41 may provide for reasonable visitation rights to the maternal and/or
42 paternal grandparents of any child of the parties. Such direction as it
43 applies to rights of visitation with a child remanded or placed in the
44 care of a person, official, agency or institution pursuant to article
45 ten of the family court act, or pursuant to an instrument approved under
46 section three hundred fifty-eight-a of the social services law, shall be
47 enforceable pursuant to part eight of article ten of the family court
48 act and sections three hundred fifty-eight-a and three hundred eighty-
49 four-a of the social services law and other applicable provisions of law
50 against any person having care and custody, or temporary care and custo-
51 dy, of the child. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any writ-
52 ten application or motion to the court for the establishment, modifica-
53 tion or enforcement of a child support obligation for persons not in
54 receipt of public assistance and care must contain either a request for
55 child support enforcement services which would authorize the collection
56 of the support obligation by the immediate issuance of an income

1 execution for support enforcement as provided for by this chapter,
2 completed in the manner specified in section one hundred eleven-g of the
3 social services law; or a statement that the applicant has applied for
4 or is in receipt of such services; or a statement that the applicant
5 knows of the availability of such services, has declined them at this
6 time and where support enforcement services pursuant to section one
7 hundred eleven-g of the social services law have been declined that the
8 applicant understands that an income deduction order may be issued
9 pursuant to subdivision (c) of section fifty-two hundred forty-two of
10 the civil practice law and rules without other child support enforcement
11 services and that payment of an administrative fee may be required. The
12 court shall provide a copy of any such request for child support
13 enforcement services to the support collection unit of the appropriate
14 social services district any time it directs payments to be made to such
15 support collection unit. Additionally, the copy of any such request
16 shall be accompanied by the name, address and social security number of
17 the parties; the date and place of the parties' marriage; the name and
18 date of birth of the child or children; and the name and address of the
19 employers and income payors of the party from whom child support is
20 sought or from the party ordered to pay child support to the other
21 party. Such direction may require the payment of a sum or sums of money
22 either directly to the custodial parent or to third persons for goods or
23 services furnished for such child, or for both payments to the custodial
24 parent and to such third persons; provided, however, that unless the
25 party seeking or receiving child support has applied for or is receiving
26 such services, the court shall not direct such payments to be made to
27 the support collection unit, as established in section one hundred
28 eleven-h of the social services law. Every order directing the payment
29 of support shall require that if either parent currently, or at any time
30 in the future, has health insurance benefits available that may be
31 extended or obtained to cover the child, such parent is required to
32 exercise the option of additional coverage in favor of such child and
33 execute and deliver to such person any forms, notices, documents or
34 instruments necessary to assure timely payment of any health insurance
35 claims for such child.

36 1-d. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the
37 court shall not consider the deployment of a parent in active service of
38 the armed forces of the United States or of the organized militia of the
39 state of New York as a detrimental factor to the awarding of custody of
40 a child to a petitioning parent where a suitable child care plan for the
41 period of such deployment has been presented to the court by such
42 parent.

43 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately.