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ILLINOIS STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

FAMILY LAW

The newsletter of the Illinois State Bar Association's Section on Family Law

Chair's column

By Rory Weiler

his time of year, the Illinois Legislature is convening and considering hundreds of pieces of new legislation, and the Legislature being in session means that your Family Law Section Council is working overtime, reviewing countless bills advanced by special interest groups and those with dubious agendas. Some are merely laughable, others easily supportable, and still others subject to great debate and the differences of reasonable minds. In addition, our members are involved with the ISBA legislative liaison, Jim Covington, in shepherding bills we have proposed through the legislative process, and testifying in House and Senate committees in support of our part of the ISBA legislative proposals.

The Family Law Council in particular, and the ISBA in general, is extremely fortunate to have Jim Covington in Springfield. Jim is an absolutely invaluable asset, possessing experience and a well-deserved reputation amongst the legisla-

tors for being a reasonable fellow who is the kind of guy who can get things done. The ISBA has fostered and enjoys excellent relationships with many of our legislators, who sponsor and support our legislative initiatives, due largely to Jim's long-standing relationships with and the well-earned respect of our friends in Springfield. Make no mistake about it; the ISBA has many friends in the Illinois State Legislature. Without them, the never-ending task of proposing or improving upon the existing laws would be a much more difficult proposition.

When the Legislature is in session, Council members will receive daily e-mails with proposed legislation to review and comment upon. A significant portion of our meetings at this time revolve around the review and discussion of positions we recommend the ISBA take with respect to the legislation forwarded to us. Often,

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Income is more than a paycheck when determining child support

By Roza Gossage, Roza Gossage P.C., Belleville, II.

50 ILCS 5/505 (a)(3)(a) sets forth that "net income is defined as the total of *all* income from *all* sources (Italics added) less the deductions set forth in this section."

Income is not defined in terms of "cash" payments or monies earned but rather the total of all income from all sources. Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines income as "the money or other form of payment one receives." It has likewise been defined in Black's Law Dictionary as "the money or other form of payment

that one receives, usually periodically, from employment, business, investments, royalties, gifts, and the like." (at page 778, 8th ed. 2004). Under these definitions, a variety of payments or benefits received by an employee or sums received by the payor will qualify as "income" for purposes of Section 505(a)(3) of the Act even though the sums would not be taxable, as income, under the Internal Revenue Code.

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Chair's column

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we are reviewing dozens of bills, and not just indicating yea or nay. Indeed, an important part of what we do is to comment specifically about why we can't approve of a particular bill, and what our specific objections to the bill are. As you might imagine, consensus building is an important part of assessments.

Important, because simply saying no often isn't enough. Jim Covington needs to be able to explain why we can't support a legislator's bill because the bill we hate today is often sponsored by the legislator whose vote we need tomorrow. Also, in many instances, we propose changes to the bill that will render it a better piece of legislation, or will mitigate the damage a proposed bill might cause, so that we can support it, or at least, ameliorate its impact on the practice. The legislative process is most often a series of negotiations and compromises, and is frequently fueled by political considerations that really have nothing whatever to do with what is or might be a necessary amendment to our ever-growing statutory law.

One such example is HB1604, a piece of legislation that seeks to impose as penalty/ punishment for visitation abuse the very same penalties available for non-payment of child support, such as suspension of the custodial parent's driver's license. The Family Law Section Council has unanimously opposed this bill, and privately chuckled at its simplistic and wrong minded attempt to shove a square peg into a round hole. Our commentary, sound factually and legally, suggested that visitation is not as easily or readily quantifiable as the payment of child support, and that there is no visitation "bank" into which visitation can be deposited, withdrawn and tracked. On its face, the bill appears, to be kind, shall we say misguided.

This particular bill is not, however, just another bit of constituent driven legislative folly. Its genesis is in a particularly ugly case that comes out of central Illinois, involving the murder of the non-custodial husband by the custodial parent's grandmother, and a subsequent order for grandparent visitation secured by the deceased husband's parents. The custodial mother, in an attempt to practically defeat the paternal grandparents' visitation rights, moved to Florida, where she now lives and refuses to comply with the court's

order. As this is being written, a civil contempt warrant has been issued for the custodial parent by the local circuit court. This bill, unfortunately, has political "legs," as our legislators struggle to employ an inappropriate legislative remedy to what most of us realize is an unsolvable problem.

As we all know from law school, hard facts make for bad law, and the approval and application of this bill beyond the particular case in question would indeed, be very bad law. Nevertheless, the bill was reported out of the House Judiciary Committee unanimously, the strenuous opposition of the ISBA and the Secretary of State's office notwithstanding, because this issue resonates with the Legislature. This one bill represents in a microcosm, the commitment, expenditure of time and effort and vigilance of your Section Council and the ISBA. We will continue the fight against this bill and others, but this example is just one of literally dozens of bills

that we review and comment upon, as we attempt to bring our efforts and talents to bear on proposed laws in the hope that through our efforts, we will improve the lives of our clients and the practice of family law for lawyers throughout the state.

And you can help by getting involved. Read your ISBA E-clips and take the opportunity to comment on pending legislation. Go to the General Assembly Web site and review the legislation that affects and impacts your practice. Contact your state reps and senators and make your voice heard on the legislation that will affect your clients and your practice. As lawyers, we owe a duty to the public at large to bring our expertise and experience to bear upon legislative issues of the day. Let your voice be heard, and become of a part of the solution, not someone who says after the fact: "What were they thinking?" Often, the answer has nothing whatever to do with the law.



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Income is more than a paycheck when determining child support

Continued from page 1

The Illinois statute relating to income is one of inclusion and not a differentiation or exclusion of the types of income. This is consistent with Illinois public policy of maximizing child support awards.

The language of the statute and case law is clear that income is income from all sources and not just earned income, even if the income is non-recurring income. The concept of income under the statute is generally interpreted broadly by the courts. In IRMO Dodds, 222 III App 3d 99 583 NE 2nd 608 (2nd dist 1991), the court held that lump sum worker's compensation award, was income under the statute. IRMO of Hart, 194 III App 3rd 839 551 NE 2nd 737 (4th dist 1990), held that non-recurring income, is included as income for determining child support and may not be deducted in calculating net income pursuant to the statute. The 5th District in the case of IRMO Klomp, 286 III App 3rd 710, 676 NE 2nd 686 -1997), indicated that pension benefits, although classified as marital asset and property in the divorce case, is still income for purposes of child support. IRMO Lindman, 356 III App 3rd 462, 824 NE 2nd 1219 (2nd dist 2005), indicated that an IRA, also awarded as property, the withdrawals thereof, are still considered income, for purposes of child support. The Eberhardt court, 387 III App 3d 226, 900 Ne 2nd 319 (1st dist 2008), also concurs with the courts in determining that income is not limited to specific type of income or monies or assets.

In *IRMO: Marriage Worral,* 334 III App 3d 550, 778 Ne 2nd 397 (2nd dist 2002), the court spoke that income is income is from all sources, and the Illinois Supreme Court specifically made that clear when it stated that in the case of *IRMO: Rogers,* 213 III 2nd 129 820 NE 2nd 386 (2004), which set forth that gifts made to the payor, were to be considered as income, for purposes of child support.

Military allowances for off base housing, (IRMO: Baylor, 324 III app 3d 213, 753 Ne 2nd 1264 (4th dist 2001), as well as, other payments or contributions reflecting sums or assets, given to an employee, as part of their compensation, constitutes income for purposes of support.

The 5th District refused to allow the payor/spouse to deduct his bonuses even though it is the subject to the payor meeting

certain employee expectations and goals to obtain the bonus, from the gross amount of income in determining child support . *IRMO Anderson*, no 3-09-0829 (Nov. 15th 2010 (Tazewell Co.).

In the case of *Einstein v. Nijim*, 831 NE 2nd 50 (4th dist 2005), the court included the bonus of the payor as income for child support, , despite the argument that bonus was non-recurring. This court also included the \$300 bi-monthly automobile allowance, as income, for purposes of determining child support.

The court addressed the issuance of stock grants as income in the cases of *IRMO*: *Colangelo and Sebela, 355 III App 3d 383, 822 NE 2nd 571 (2nd dist 2005)*. The Husband was awarded stock options in his divorce as his share of the distribution of marital assets. When he exercised the stock options, that were awarded to him in the divorce, he argued that the exercise of the stock should not be included as income for child support. The court disagreed with him and found that the exercise of the stock option constituted income for child support purposes.

Other states have addressed issues regarding stock, in that the Ohio case of *Murray* v. Murray, 128 Ohio App. 3d 662 716 Ne 2nd (123th dist Warren County 1999), held that unexercised stock options, did constitute income for child support purposes, under their statute, which is similar to our Section 505. In that case, the Ohio court noted that the Husband received stock options, on a periodic basis and that these options were also a part of his compensation for his employment. That court noted that as a matter of policy, if unexercised stock options were not included in the payor's income, "an employee receiving such options, would be able to shield a significant part of his income, from the courts and deprive his children, of the standard of living, they would otherwise enjoy and that is in direct contradiction to the very purpose of the child support statute.

The Supreme Court, in the Rogers case also commented on the issue of non-recurring income. 'The relevant focus under Section 505, is the parent's economic situation at the time the child support calculations are made by the court. If a parent has received payments that would otherwise qualify as

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"income," under the statute, nothing in the law permits those payments to be excluded, from consideration, merely because the payments might not be forthcoming in the future. The Act does not provide for a deduction of recurring income, in calculating net income for purposes of child support..."

Other states have explored the issue of what is to be included in determining what gross income is to be considered in determining child support.

The Missouri Supreme Court, in the case of *Keller v. Keller*, 224 SW 3rd 73, examined the payor's withdrawal of loans to himself and he was the sole shareholder of the corpora-

tion. The court also considered the increase in corporations retained earnings, which had more than doubled since the marital dissolution. The court concluded that these were financial resources, from which he personally benefited. That court considered retained earnings, even though the payor did not receive those funds personally, to be included as income to the payor, for purposes of determining child support. (Missouri RSMO 452 340).

The California case of *IRMO Cheriton*, 111Cal. Rptr 2d 755 (Cal app 2001), states that stock options are part of a parent's compensation and is included, as income, for the

purpose of child support. "Where a parent enjoys "substantial income, in addition, as part of his overall employment compensation and must be used to calculate child support" *Cheriton* at pg. 767, citing *IRMO Kerr*, 77 Cal App.4th at P 96. The *Cheriton* case also discusses the meaning of "gross income," which is similar to the wording of the Illinois statute, "gross income means income from whatever source derived "Section 4058, subd (a)."

The moral of the story is: If it looks like, smells like, and feels like a gain, income or additional asset or money, whether it was earned or received, it is income.

Illinois has three requirements to be legally married. However, a party can be married without demonstrating all three

By Kim Anderson

was recently called upon to defend a young man in a dissolution case wherein he stated he had never married the woman. I'll confess, this was a new one for me. I've been retained on many causes of action over the years, but I have never been called upon to defend the actual existence of a marriage. Our state is very clear in its requirements for a binding marriage.

There are distinct rules required in order to be legally married in Illinois. A person is required to purchase a marriage license. The marriage has to be solemnized and registered. 750 ILCS 5/209. Illinois does not recognize marriage by proxy, or common law marriages.

In my case, the young couple was from Korea. My client had been in the United States for a couple of years and his future bride came to live with him a year before "the wedding." The couple wanted to be married, but decided to wait another year before exchanging vows. The soon-to-be bride's mother and father were in the United States for a visit and would not be able to make another trip back to the states for the actual wedding. Accordingly, a party was planned at a local restaurant and the young couple dressed in wedding attire. Photographs were taken of the them and the "wedding party" at the church. The family preacher was also on hand to read passages from the Bible. A wedding video was made, a cake was cut and rings exchanged. Later, when the relationship ceased, some of the attendees would swear that they were actually at a wedding ceremony and others would disagree, stating it was only an engagement party.

The "husband" filed a motion to dismiss the Petition for Dissolution. Both parties agreed that no marriage license had been secured and there was no registration of the marriage. The only issue before the court was whether the parties had solemnized the marriage.

The "wife's" counsel stated that *Haderaski* controlled the case, and argued that a motion to dismiss the Petition for Dissolution was improper. 415 Ill.118, 112 N.E.2d 714 (1953). *Haderaski* provides that the validity of a marriage in Illinois can exist without a license. It states that unless the statute expressly declares a marriage contracted without the necessary parental consent, or compliance with other requirements to be a nullity, such statutes are construed to be directory only in this respect, so that the marriage is valid.

In *Haderaski*, the husband claimed that there was no marriage. However, a document obtained from the church clearly demonstrated that vows had been exchanged. The document revealed that the husband was asked if he was entering the marriage

freely and voluntarily, and under his own free will. The husband confirmed that he was entering into the marriage, and he was under no duress. The court in *Haderaski* found that there was a solemnization and deemed the marriage valid. In my case however, it was argued that *Haderaski* was not controlling, as the parties did not have solemnization. My client denied that he ever exchanged wedding vows with his girlfriend.

This case was interesting as it also revealed some cultural differences regarding ceremonies of marriage. According to my client, it is not unusual to have a party (which quite frankly resembled a wedding reception) where the pending nuptials are announced to the friends and families. However, he denied ever exchanging any vows with his girlfriend, but did acknowledge exchanging rings with her.

There are a limited number of cases in which our courts can review to determine if a marriage exists. Most cases on review appear in the probate division. One such case was *In Re the Estate of Andrea Marie Hall*, 302 III.App.3d 829, 707 N.E.2d 201 (1st Dist. 1998).

In Hall, one partner in a lesbian relationship sought a "surviving spouse's" share of the decedent's estate. The administrator of the estate filed a motion to dismiss and it was granted by the trial court. The partner, Regina, argued that the prohibition against same-sex marriages violated the equal protection provision of the United States and the Illinois Constitution. The reviewing court held that the issue was non justiciable and moot because it did not affect the actual controversy. The reviewing court held that even if they found same sex marriages to be valid (which they didn't), that would not help Regina, as they had never married. (No license was obtained and the marriage was not registered). Regina and Andrea had only exchanged vows with each other.

The court held that Regina could have filed a lawsuit regarding the prohibition of her obtaining a marriage license, then there would be an actual controversy. But Regina admitted that they had a marriage ceremony, but they did not get a license (and couldn't) and they did not register their marriage.

The Hall court said, "It is clear from the alleged facts that the relationship did not meet the statutory requirements for a valid marriage. Under the IMDMA, the formalities for a lawful marriage require a marriage between a man and a woman be licensed, solemnized

and registered as provided in the act. 750 ILCS 5/201. Notwithstanding the alleged unconstitutional requirement that the couple be a man and wife, petitioner has failed to allege sufficient facts to establish a valid marriage. They did not obtain a license nor did they register their marriage.

The *Hall* court looked at other cases where they conferred "spouse" upon individuals where their marriages lacked compliance with one of the directory requirements of the Marriage Act, and those cases were inapplicable to Hall.

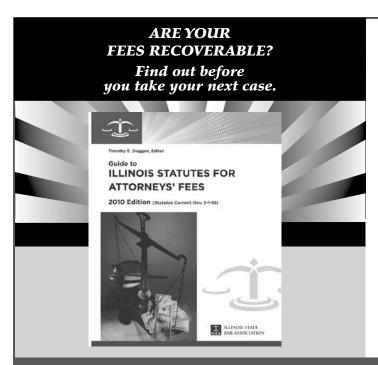
Hall looked at In re Driskell, a case where the wedded coupled failed to follow the one day waiting period after obtaining the license. In Re Driskell, 197 Ill.App.3d 836, 555 N.E.2d 428 1990 Ill.App. LEXIS 744 (4th District 1990). The court found that the marriage was not void due to the violation, but rendered it invalid on other grounds.

In *In Re the Estate of Bailey*, the wedded couple was missing the marriage license, and they were found to be legally married. *In re the Estate of Bailey*, 97 III.App.3d 781,

423 N.E.2d 488, 1981 III.App. LEXIS 2877 (5th District 1981). *Bailey* looked at evidence supporting a marriage, such as:

- Life insurance policy
- Wife's driver's license, (what name is on it)
- Joint account listing them as married.
- Introduced to others as either my husband or wife
- Beneficiary listed as "my wife"
- Warranty deed on property listed their names as "husband and wife"
- The Bailey court looked at "reputation, cohabitation and acknowledgment of the parties."

These cases involved situations where the party seeking enforcement of the marriage believed in good faith that he or she was lawfully married, and but for the failure to comply with a directory requirement, this would be the circumstance. In conclusion, should you be called upon to defend or bring a Petition for Dissolution without all three requirements present (license, solemnization, and registration), be careful, as each case is factually distinct.



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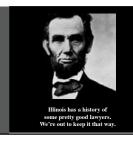
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Friday, 4/1/11- Chicago, ISBA Regional Office—Military family Law Issues. Presented by the ISBA Family Law Section and the ISBA Military Affairs Section. TBD

Tuesday, 4/5/11- Teleseminar—Debt Collection Liability and Strategies for Businesses, Part 1. 12-1.

Wednesday, 4/6/11- Teleseminar— Debt Collection Liability and Strategies for Businesses, Part 2. 12-1.

Thursday, 4/7/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Elder Law Issues for Everyone: Your Aging Clients, Their Parents, and You. Presented by the ISBA Standing Committee on Women and the Law; cosponsored by the Elder law Section, the General Practice Section and the Senior Lawyers Section. 8:15-4:45.

Friday, 4/8/11- Bloomington, Holiday Inn and Suites—DUI, Traffic and Secretary of State Related Issues. Presented by the ISBA Traffic Laws/Courts Section. 8:55-4:00.

Friday, 4/8/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Practice Tips and Pointers on Child-Related Issues. Presented by the ISBA Child Law Section; co-sponsored by the Mental Health Law Section, the ISBA Family Law Section; and the ISBA Education Law Section. TBD.

Friday, 4/8/11- Dekalb, NIU School of Law—Mechanics Liens and Construction Claims. Presented by the ISBA Special Committee on Construction Law; co-sponsored by the ISBA Commercial, Banking and Bankruptcy Section, the ISBA Alternate Dispute Resolution Section, and the ISBA Real Estate Section. 8:55-3:45.

Tuesday, 4/12/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Recent Developments in IP Law. Presented by the ISBA Intellectual Property Section. 9:30-11:30.

Tuesday, 4/12/11- Teleseminar—Creditor Interests in Partnership, LLC and S Corp Interests. 12-1.

Thursday, 4/14/11- Teleseminar—Ethics Issues for Transactional Attorneys. 12-1.

Thursday, 4/14/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Civil Practice Update. Presented by the ISBA Civil Practice and Procedure Section. 9-4.

Friday, 4/15/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Liens. Presented by the ISBA Tort Law Section. 9-12:30.

Monday, 4/18/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Illinois Supreme Court in Review: Important 2010 Cases, Procedures and Rules. Presented by the Illinois State Bar Association. 11:45-2:00.

Tuesday, 4/19/11- Teleseminar—Structuring, Administering and Investing Charitable Endowments, Part 1.12-1.

Wednesday, 4/20/11- Teleseminar— Structuring, Administering and Investing Charitable Endowments, Part 2. 12-1.

Tuesday, 4/26/11- Teleseminar—2011 Retaliation Claims Update. 12-1.

Thursday, 4/28/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—The Ethics of Good Regulatory Decision Making. Presented by the ISBA Energy Utilities, Telecommunications and Transportation Section; co-sponsored by the Chicago Bar Association Public Utilities Law Committee. 1:00-3:15.

Thursday, 4/28/11- Friday, 4/29/11-Spoon River College, Macomb—Attorney Education in Child Custody & Visitation Matters in 2010. Presented by the ISBA Bench and Bar Section; co-sponsored by the ISBA Child Law Section and the ISBA Family Law Section. 8:30-4; 8:30-1.

May 2011

Tuesday, 5/3/11- Teleseminar—Ethics & Confidentiality in a Digital World. 12-1.

Tuesday, 5/3/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Hanging Out a Shingle or Putting Up a Roof. Presented by the ISBA Young Lawyers Division. 12:30-4:00.

Wednesday, 5/4/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Settlement in Federal Courts. Presented by the ISBA Federal Civil Practice Section. 11:55- 4:15.

Thursday, 5/5/11-Teleseminar—Securities Law Issues for Medium and Smaller Businesses. 12-1.

Thursday, 5/5/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Municipal Administrative Law Judge Education Program. Presented by the ISBA Administrative Law Section; co-sponsored by the Illinois Association of Administrative Law Judges. TBD.

Friday, 5/6/11- Lombard, Lindner Conference Center—Business Purchases Involving Real Estate. Presented by the ISBA Real Estate Section. 8:55-4:30.

Friday, 5/6/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Legal Ethics in Corporate
Law- 2011. Presented by the ISBA Corporate
Law Department Section. 12:30-4:45.

Tuesday, 5/10/11- Teleseminar—Managing a Trust: Trustee Duties, Liability, and Investment Decisions, Part 1. 12-1.

Tuesday, 5/10/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—A Primer on Trademark Office Actions- A Panel Discussion. Presented by the ISBA Intellectual Property Section. 9:30-11:30.

Wednesday, 5/11/11- Teleseminar— Managing a Trust: Trustee Duties, Liability, and Investment Decisions, Part 2. 12-1.

Wednesday, 5/11/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—Effective Advocacy for Juveniles with Mental Health Needs. Presented by the ISBA Mental Health Law Section; co-sponsored by the ISBA Education Law Section, the Child Law Section and the ISBA Standing Committee on Disability Law. TBD.

Thursday, 5/12-Friday, 5/13/11- Chicago, ISBA Chicago Regional Office—2011 Annual Environmental Law Conference. Presented by the ISBA Environmental Law Section. 9-5; 9-1. ■

Save the Date: April 8, 2011

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