

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESSB 5173

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning property exempt from execution.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Stanford, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Pedersen, Saldaña and Trudeau).

**Senate Committee on Law & Justice**  
**House Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary**

**Background:** A creditor may seek enforcement of a debt owed by a debtor through execution, attachment, or garnishment of the debtor's property.

Execution is the legal process for enforcing a court judgment for the payment of money or property by levying on the judgment debtor's property.

Attachment is a legal process that allows a plaintiff in a court action to ask the court to attach the defendant's property during the pendency of the action as security for satisfaction of a judgment that may be rendered in favor of the plaintiff.

Garnishment is a legal process by which a judgment creditor may recover funds owed by a judgment debtor by compelling third parties to divert to the creditor certain funds owned by or owed to the debtor, such as funds held in the debtor's bank accounts or the debtor's wages held by an employer.

Washington law entitles individual debtors or households to claim certain property as exempt from execution, attachment, and garnishment:

- all wearing apparel of every individual and family, but not to exceed \$3,500 in value in furs, jewelry, and personal ornaments for any individual;
- all private libraries including electronic media, but not to exceed \$3,500 in value;
- a cell phone, personal computer, and printer;
- to each individual or household, household goods, appliances, furniture, and home and yard equipment not to exceed \$6,500 in value for individuals or \$13,000 for

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- households, where no single item exceeds \$750 in value;
- to each individual or household, other personal property, except personal earnings, not to exceed \$3,000 in value of which not more than \$1,500 in value may consist of cash;
  - for an individual, a motor vehicle used for personal transportation, not to exceed \$3,250;
  - for a household, two motor vehicles used for personal transportation, not to exceed \$6,500 in aggregate value;
  - any past due, current, or future child support paid or owed to the debtor;
  - all professionally prescribed health aids for the debtor or a dependent of the debtor;
  - to any individual, the right to or proceeds of a payment not to exceed \$20,000 on account of personal bodily injury of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is a dependent, or the right to or proceeds of a payment in compensation of loss of future earnings of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is or was a dependent;
  - to an individual farmer, farm trucks, farm stock, farm tools, farm equipment, supplies and seed, not to exceed \$10,000 in value;
  - to a physician, surgeon, attorney, member of the clergy, or other professional person, the individual's library, office furniture, office equipment and supplies, not to exceed \$10,000 in value;
  - to any other individual, the tools and instruments and materials used to carry on their trade, not to exceed \$10,000 in value; and
  - tuition units, purchased more than two years prior to the date of bankruptcy filing or court judgment.

No money paid or payable under worker's compensation shall, before the issuance and delivery of the payment, be assigned, charged, or taken in execution, attached, or garnished, or pass or be paid to any other person.

**Summary:** An individual may claim the following property as exempt from execution, attachment, and garnishment:

- all wearing apparel of every individual and family, but not to exceed \$3,500 in value in furs, jewelry, and personal ornaments for any individual;
- all private libraries including electronic media, but not to exceed \$3,500 in value;
- a cell phone, personal computer, and printer;
- all household goods, appliances, furniture, and home and yard equipment not to exceed \$6,500 for the individual;
- in a bankruptcy case, any other personal property, except personal savings, not to exceed \$10,000 in value determined as of the date the bankruptcy petition is filed;
- other than in a bankruptcy case, other personal property, except personal earnings, not to exceed \$3,000 in value;
- a motor vehicle not to exceed \$15,000 in aggregate value;
- any past due, current, or future child support paid or owed to the debtor;
- all professionally prescribed health aids for the debtor or a dependent of the debtor;

- to any individual, the right to or proceeds of a payment not to exceed \$20,000 of personal bodily injury of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is a dependent, or the right to or proceeds of a payment in compensation of loss of future earnings of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is or was a dependent;
- in a bankruptcy case, the right to or proceeds of personal injury of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is a dependent, or, the right to or proceeds of a payment in compensation of loss of future earnings of the debtor or an individual of whom the debtor is or was a dependent which will be free of the enforcement of the claims of creditors, except to the extent such claims are for the satisfaction of any liens or subrogation claims arising out of the claims for personal injury or death;
- the tools, instruments, materials, and supplies used to carry on their trade not to exceed \$15,000 in value; and
- tuition units, purchased more than two years prior to the date of bankruptcy filing or court judgment.

In the case of married persons, each spouse is entitled to the exemptions of personal property, which may be combined with the other spouse's exemption in the same property or taken in different exempt property.

The garnishment writ form sent to garnishees is modified by adding instructions to double automatic exemption values for specified funds if the garnishee has documentation that the funds in the account are the community property of married persons or domestic partners.

The garnishment notice and exemption claim form sent to debtors is modified by:

- rewording the notice of exemptions language and adding language regarding the doubled value of specific exemptions for marital communities and domestic partnerships;
- moving debt-specific exemption claims into their own subsection separate from payment-specific exemptions, and listing the doubled value for marital communities and domestic partnerships;
- adding a subsection allowing a debtor to declare under penalty of perjury they are married and wish to use a marital exemption; and
- removing the signature line for a spouse and moving the debtor's signature line to the end of each form.

No money paid or payable under worker's compensation shall be assigned, charged, or taken in execution, attached, or garnished, or pass or be paid to any other person. Worker's compensation payments will retain their exempt status even after issuance.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	29	19	
House	67	30	(House amended)
House	65	32	(House reconsidered/amended)

Senate 30 16 (Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 23, 2023

July 1, 2025 (Section 2)