

CHAPTER 588

CONTEMPTS OF COURT

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588.01 CONTEMPTS.

Subdivision 1. **Kinds.** Contempts of court are of two kinds, direct and constructive.

Subd. 2. **Direct.** Direct contempts are those occurring in the immediate view and presence of the court, and arise from one or more of the following acts:

(1) disorderly, contemptuous, or insolent behavior toward the judge while holding court, tending to interrupt the due course of a trial or other judicial proceedings;

(2) a breach of the peace, boisterous conduct, or violent disturbance, tending to interrupt the business of the court.

Subd. 3. **Constructive.** Constructive contempts are those not committed in the immediate presence of the court, and of which it has no personal knowledge, and may arise from any of the following acts or omissions:

(1) misbehavior in office, or other willful neglect or violation of duty, by an attorney, court administrator, sheriff, coroner, or other person appointed or elected to perform a judicial or ministerial service;

(2) deceit or abuse of the process or proceedings of the court by a party to an action or special proceeding;

(3) disobedience of any lawful judgment, order, or process of the court;

(4) assuming to be an attorney or other officer of the court, and acting as such without authority;

(5) rescuing any person or property in the custody of an officer by virtue of an order or process of the court;

(6) unlawfully detaining a witness or party to an action while going to, remaining at, or returning from the court where the action is to be tried;

(7) any other unlawful interference with the process or proceedings of a court;

(8) disobedience of a subpoena duly served, or refusing to be sworn or to answer as a witness;

(9) when summoned as a juror in a court, neglecting to attend or serve, improperly conversing with a party to an action to be tried at the court or with any person relative to the merits of the action, or receiving

a communication from a party or other person in reference to it, and failing to immediately disclose the same to the court;

(10) disobedience, by an inferior tribunal or officer, of the lawful judgment, order, or process of a superior court, proceeding in an action or special proceeding in any court contrary to law after it has been removed from its jurisdiction, or disobedience of any lawful order or process of a judicial officer;

(11) failure or refusal to pay a surcharge levied pursuant to section 357.021, subdivision 6.

History: (9792, 9793) *RL s 4638, 4639; 1981 c 341 s 5; 1983 c 359 s 84; 1Sp1986 c 3 art 1 s 82; 1998 c 367 art 8 s 9*

588.02 POWER TO PUNISH; LIMITATION.

Every court and judicial officer may punish a contempt by fine or imprisonment, or both. In addition, when the contempt involves the willful disobedience of an order of the court requiring the payment of money for the support or maintenance of a minor child, the court may require the payment of the costs and a reasonable attorney's fee, incurred in the prosecution of the contempt, to be paid by the guilty party. When it is a constructive contempt, it must appear that the right or remedy of a party to an action or special proceeding was defeated or prejudiced by it before the contempt can be punished by imprisonment or by a fine exceeding \$50.

History: (9794) *RL s 4640; 1945 c 434 s 1; 1983 c 359 s 85*

588.03 SUMMARY PUNISHMENT.

A direct contempt may be punished summarily, for which an order shall be made reciting the facts as occurring in the immediate view and presence of the court or officer, and adjudging the person proceeded against to be guilty of a contempt, and that the person be punished as therein specified.

History: (9795) *RL s 4641; 1986 c 444*

588.04 ARREST; ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE.

(a) In cases of constructive contempt, an affidavit of the facts constituting the contempt shall be presented to the court or officer, who may either issue a warrant of arrest to bring the person charged to answer or, without a previous arrest, upon notice, or upon an order to show cause, which may be served by a sheriff or other officer in the same manner as a summons in an action, may commit the person to jail, impose a fine, or both, and make such order thereupon as the case may require.

(b) When the underlying case involves an obligation arising out of a consumer debt primarily for personal, family, or household purposes, and the contempt is a failure to comply with judgment debtor disclosure requirements under section 491A.02, subdivision 9, or 550.011, bail must be set at \$50. For a subsequent contempt for a failure to disclose in the same action, bail must be an amount set by the court after considering aggravating and mitigating factors. Bail posted under this section must be returned to the judgment debtor.

History: (9796) *RL s 4642; 1986 c 444; 2013 c 104 s 5*

588.05 PERSONS IN CUSTODY.

If the party charged is in the custody of an officer by virtue of a legal order or process, civil or criminal, except upon a sentence for felony, an order may be made for production of the party by the officer having

custody, that the party may answer; and the party shall thereupon be produced and held until an order is made for disposition.

History: (9797) *RL s 4643; 1986 c 444*

588.06 ADMISSION TO BAIL.

When a warrant of arrest is issued pursuant to sections 588.01 to 588.15, the court or officer shall direct whether the person charged may be admitted to bail for appearance, or detained in custody without bail, and, if admitted to bail, the amount thereof. Such direction shall be specified in the warrant.

History: (9798) *RL s 4644; 1986 c 444*

588.07 WARRANT, HOW EXECUTED.

Upon executing the warrant of arrest, the sheriff shall keep the person in actual custody, bring the person before the court or officer, and detain the person until an order shall be made in the premises, unless the warrant shall contain a direction to admit the person to bail, in which case the person shall be discharged from the arrest, upon executing and delivering to the officer, at any time before the return day of the warrant, a recognizance, with two sufficient sureties, to the effect that the person will appear on the return of the warrant and abide the order of the court or officer thereupon, or pay as may be directed the sum therein specified.

History: (9799) *RL s 4645; 1986 c 444*

588.08 RETURN OF WARRANT; PENALTY FOR FAILURE.

The officer shall return the warrant and the recognizance, if any, received from the person so arrested, by the return day specified therein. If the person fails to make the return, a warrant of arrest, not bailable, may be issued against the person, specifying therein the cause of issuing it. The officer to whom the last-mentioned warrant is delivered shall execute it by arresting the person proceeded against, bringing the person personally before the court or officer, and detaining the person in custody until otherwise ordered.

History: (9800) *RL s 4646; 1986 c 444*

588.09 HEARING.

When the person arrested has been brought into court, or has appeared, the court or officer shall investigate the charge by examining the person and the witnesses for and against the person, for which an adjournment may be had from time to time, if necessary.

History: (9801) *RL s 4647; 1986 c 444*

588.10 PENALTIES FOR CONTEMPT OF COURT.

Upon the evidence so taken, the court or officer shall determine the guilt or innocence of the person proceeded against and, if the person is adjudged guilty of the contempt charged, the person shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$250, or by imprisonment in the county jail, workhouse, or work farm for not more than six months, or by both. In case of the person's inability to pay the fine or endure the imprisonment, the person may be relieved by the court or officer in such manner and upon such terms as may be just.

History: (9802) *RL s 4648; 1933 c 267; 1986 c 444*

588.11 INDEMNITY TO INJURED PARTY.

If any actual loss or injury to a party in an action or special proceeding, prejudicial to the person's right therein, is caused by such contempt, the court or officer, in addition to the fine or imprisonment imposed therefor, may order the person guilty of the contempt to pay the party aggrieved a sum of money sufficient to indemnify the party and satisfy the party's costs and expenses, including a reasonable attorney's fee incurred in the prosecution of such contempt, which order, and the acceptance of money thereunder, shall be a bar to an action for such loss and injury.

History: (9803) *RL s 4649; 1945 c 434 s 2; 1986 c 444*

588.12 IMPRISONMENT UNTIL PERFORMANCE.

When the contempt consists in the omission to perform an act which is yet in the power of the person to perform, the person may be imprisoned until the person performs it, and in such case the act shall be specified in the warrant of commitment.

History: (9804) *RL s 4650; 1986 c 444*

588.13 INDICTMENT.

Persons proceeded against under sections 588.01 to 588.15 are also liable to indictment for the same misconduct, if it is an indictable offense; but the court before which a conviction is had on the indictment, in passing sentence, shall take into consideration the punishment before inflicted.

History: (9805) *RL s 4651*

588.14 SECOND WARRANT; ACTION ON RECOGNIZANCE; MEASURE OF DAMAGES.

When a warrant of arrest has been returned served, if the person arrested does not appear on the return day, the court or officer may issue another warrant, or may order the recognizance prosecuted, or both. If the recognizance is prosecuted, the measure of damages shall be the amount of the loss or injury sustained by the aggrieved party by reason of the misconduct for which the warrant was issued and the costs of the proceeding.

History: (9806) *RL s 4652*

588.15 ILLNESS MAY EXCUSE OFFICER FROM PRODUCING PERSON.

When, under sections 588.01 to 588.15, an officer is required to keep a person arrested in actual custody and to bring the person before a court or officer, the inability, from illness or other cause, of the person to attend, shall be a sufficient excuse for not producing the person in court.

History: (9807) *RL s 4653; 1986 c 444*

588.20 CRIMINAL CONTEMPTS.

Subdivision 1. **Felony contempt.** (a) A person who knowingly and willfully disobeys a subpoena lawfully issued in relation to a crime of violence, as defined in section 609.11, subdivision 9, with the intent to obstruct the criminal justice process is guilty of a felony and may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than five years or to payment of a fine of not more than \$10,000, or both.

(b) A felony charge under this subdivision may be filed upon the person's nonappearance. However, the charge must be dismissed if the person voluntarily appears within 48 hours after the time required for

appearance on the subpoena and reappears as directed by the court until discharged from the subpoena by the court. This paragraph does not apply if the person appears as a result of being apprehended by law enforcement authorities.

Subd. 2. **Misdemeanor contempt.** Every person who commits a contempt of court, of any one of the following kinds, is guilty of a misdemeanor:

(1) disorderly, contemptuous, or insolent behavior, committed during the sitting of the court, in its immediate view and presence, and directly tending to interrupt its proceedings, or to impair the respect due to its authority;

(2) behavior of like character in the presence of a referee, while actually engaged in a trial or hearing, pursuant to an order of court, or in the presence of a jury while actually sitting for the trial of a cause, or upon an inquest or other proceeding authorized by law;

(3) breach of the peace, noise, or other disturbance directly tending to interrupt the proceedings of a court, jury, or referee;

(4) willful disobedience to the lawful process or other mandate of a court other than the conduct described in subdivision 1;

(5) resistance willfully offered to its lawful process or other mandate other than the conduct described in subdivision 1;

(6) contumacious and unlawful refusal to be sworn as a witness, or, after being sworn, to answer any legal and proper interrogatory;

(7) publication of a false or grossly inaccurate report of its proceedings; or

(8) willful failure to pay court-ordered child support when the obligor has the ability to pay.

No person may be punished as provided in this subdivision for publishing a true, full, and fair report of a trial, argument, decision, or other court proceeding.

History: (10042) *RL s 4854; 1993 c 340 s 53; 1998 c 367 art 2 s 3*

588.21 FAILURE TO FILE COMPLETE INCOME TAX RETURN.

In addition to other sanctions, when a taxpayer is in contempt of an order of the district court for failure to file a complete and proper income tax return under the provisions of section 270C.61, subdivision 2, the court may order a civil fine not to exceed \$50 for each day the contempt of court continues, or for each separate contempt of court, or both. The court may award costs, expenses, reasonable attorney's fees, and witness fees to the state. The court may issue additional orders to ensure compliance with the court's prior order.

History: 1985 c 238 s 1; 1990 c 480 art 1 s 46; 2005 c 151 art 2 s 17