

# AN ACT

To amend section 301.28 of the Revised Code to modify the law governing payment of county expenses by a financial transaction device.

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio:*

SECTION 1. That section 301.28 of the Revised Code be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 301.28. (A) As used in this section:

(1) "Financial transaction device" includes a credit card, debit card, charge card, or prepaid or stored value card, or automated clearinghouse network credit, debit, or e-check entry that includes, but is not limited to, accounts receivable and internet-initiated, point of purchase, and telephone-initiated applications or any other device or method for making an electronic payment or transfer of funds.

(2) "County expenses" includes fees, costs, taxes, assessments, fines, penalties, payments, or any other expense a person owes to a county office under the authority of a county ~~elected~~ official other than dog registration and kennel fees required to be paid under Chapter 955. of the Revised Code.

(3) "County ~~elected~~ official" includes the county auditor, county treasurer, county engineer, county recorder, county prosecuting attorney, county sheriff, ~~and~~ county coroner, county park district and board of county commissioners, the clerk of the probate court, the clerk of the juvenile court, the clerks of court for all divisions of the courts of common pleas, and the clerk of the court of common pleas, the clerk of a county-operated municipal court, and the clerk of a county court.

The term "county expenses" includes county expenses owed to the board of health of the general health district or a combined health district in the county. If the board of county commissioners authorizes county expenses to be paid by financial transaction devices under this section, then the board of health and the general health district and the combined health district may accept payments by financial transaction devices under this section as if the board were a "county official" and the district were a county office. However, in the case of a general health district formed by

unification of general health districts under section 3709.10 of the Revised Code, this entitlement applies only if all the boards of county commissioners of all counties in the district have authorized payments to be accepted by financial transaction devices.

(B) Notwithstanding any other section of the Revised Code and except as provided in division (D) of this section, a board of county commissioners may adopt a resolution authorizing the acceptance of payments by financial transaction devices for county expenses. The resolution shall include the following:

(1) A specification of those county ~~elected~~ officials who, and of the county offices under those county officials that, are authorized to accept payments by financial transaction devices;

(2) A list of county expenses that may be paid for through the use of a financial transaction device;

(3) Specific identification of financial transaction devices that the board authorizes as acceptable means of payment for county expenses. Uniform acceptance of financial transaction devices among different types of county expenses is not required.

(4) The amount, if any, authorized as a surcharge or convenience fee under division (E) of this section for persons using a financial transaction device. Uniform application of surcharges or convenience fees among different types of county expenses is not required.

(5) A specific provision as provided in division (G) of this section requiring the payment of a penalty if a payment made by means of a financial transaction device is returned or dishonored for any reason.

The board's resolution shall also designate the county treasurer as an administrative agent to solicit proposals, within guidelines established by the board in the resolution and in compliance with the procedures provided in division (C) of this section, from financial institutions, issuers of financial transaction devices, and processors of financial transaction devices, to make recommendations about those proposals to the board, and to assist county offices in implementing the county's financial transaction devices program. The county treasurer may decline this responsibility within thirty days after receiving a copy of the board's resolution by notifying the board in writing within that period. If the treasurer so notifies the board, the board shall perform the duties of the administrative agent.

If the county treasurer is the administrative agent and fails to administer the county financial transaction devices program in accordance with the guidelines in the board's resolution, the board shall notify the treasurer in writing of the board's findings, explain the failures, and give the treasurer

six months to correct the failures. If the treasurer fails to make the appropriate corrections within that six-month period, the board may pass a resolution declaring the board to be the administrative agent. The board may later rescind that resolution at its discretion.

(C) The county shall follow the procedures provided in this division whenever it plans to contract with financial institutions, issuers of financial transaction devices, or processors of financial transaction devices for the purposes of this section. The administrative agent shall request proposals from at least three financial institutions, issuers of financial transaction devices, or processors of financial transaction devices, as appropriate in accordance with the resolution adopted under division (B) of this section. Prior to sending any financial institution, issuer, or processor a copy of any such request, the county shall advertise its intent to request proposals in a newspaper of general circulation in the county once a week for two consecutive weeks. The notice shall state that the county intends to request proposals; specify the purpose of the request; indicate the date, which shall be at least ten days after the second publication, on which the request for proposals will be mailed to financial institutions, issuers, or processors; and require that any financial institution, issuer, or processor, whichever is appropriate, interested in receiving the request for proposals submit written notice of this interest to the county not later than noon of the day on which the request for proposals will be mailed.

Upon receiving the proposals, the administrative agent shall review them and make a recommendation to the board of county commissioners on which proposals to accept. The board of county commissioners shall consider the agent's recommendation and review all proposals submitted, and then may choose to contract with any or all of the entities submitting proposals, as appropriate. The board shall provide any financial institution, issuer, or processor that submitted a proposal, but with which the board does not enter into a contract, notice that its proposal is rejected. The notice shall state the reasons for the rejection, indicate whose proposals were accepted, and provide a copy of the terms and conditions of the successful bids.

(D) A board of county commissioners adopting a resolution under this section shall send a copy of the resolution to each county ~~elected~~ official in the county who is authorized by the resolution to accept payments by financial transaction devices. After receiving the resolution and before accepting payments by financial transaction devices, a county ~~elected~~ official shall provide written notification to the board of county commissioners of the official's intent to implement the resolution within the official's office. Each county office subject to the board's resolution adopted

under division (B) of this section may use only the financial institutions, issuers of financial transaction devices, and processors of financial transaction devices with which the board of county commissioners contracts, and each such office is subject to the terms of those contracts.

If a county office under the authority of a county ~~elected~~ official is directly responsible for collecting one or more county expenses and the county ~~elected~~ official determines not to accept payments by financial transaction devices for one or more of those expenses, the office shall not be required to accept payments by financial transaction devices, notwithstanding the adoption of a resolution by the board of county commissioners under this section.

Any office of a clerk of the court of common pleas that accepts financial transaction devices on or before July 1, 1999, and any other county office that accepted such devices before January 1, 1998, may continue to accept such devices without being subject to any resolution passed by the board of county commissioners under division (B) of this section, or any other oversight by the board of the office's financial transaction devices program. Any such office may use surcharges or convenience fees in any manner the county ~~elected~~ official in charge of the office determines to be appropriate, and, if the county treasurer consents, may appoint the county treasurer to be the office's administrative agent for purposes of accepting financial transaction devices. In order not to be subject to the resolution of the board of county commissioners adopted under division (B) of this section, a county office shall notify the board in writing within thirty days after March 30, 1999, that it accepted financial transaction devices prior to January 1, 1998, or, in the case of the office of a clerk of the court of common pleas, the clerk has accepted or will accept such devices on or before July 1, 1999. Each such notification shall explain how processing costs associated with financial transaction devices are being paid and shall indicate whether surcharge or convenience fees are being passed on to consumers.

(E) A board of county commissioners may establish a surcharge or convenience fee that may be imposed upon a person making payment by a financial transaction device. The surcharge or convenience fee shall not be imposed unless authorized or otherwise permitted by the rules prescribed by an agreement governing the use and acceptance of the financial transaction device.

If a surcharge or convenience fee is imposed, every county office accepting payment by a financial transaction device, regardless of whether that office is subject to a resolution adopted by a board of county commissioners, shall clearly post a notice in that office and shall notify each

person making a payment by such a device about the surcharge or fee. Notice to each person making a payment shall be provided regardless of the medium used to make the payment and in a manner appropriate to that medium. Each notice shall include all of the following:

(1) A statement that there is a surcharge or convenience fee for using a financial transaction device;

(2) The total amount of the charge or fee expressed in dollars and cents for each transaction, or the rate of the charge or fee expressed as a percentage of the total amount of the transaction, whichever is applicable;

(3) A clear statement that the surcharge or convenience fee is nonrefundable.

(F) If a person elects to make a payment to the county by a financial transaction device and a surcharge or convenience fee is imposed, the payment of the surcharge or fee shall be considered voluntary and the surcharge or fee is not refundable.

(G) If a person makes payment by financial transaction device and the payment is returned or dishonored for any reason, the person is liable to the county for payment of a penalty over and above the amount of the expense due. The board of county commissioners shall determine the amount of the penalty, which may be either a fee not to exceed twenty dollars or payment of the amount necessary to reimburse the county for banking charges, legal fees, or other expenses incurred by the county in collecting the returned or dishonored payment. The remedies and procedures provided in this section are in addition to any other available civil or criminal remedies provided by law.

(H) No person making any payment by financial transaction device to a county office shall be relieved from liability for the underlying obligation except to the extent that the county realizes final payment of the underlying obligation in cash or its equivalent. If final payment is not made by the financial transaction device issuer or other guarantor of payment in the transaction, the underlying obligation shall survive and the county shall retain all remedies for enforcement that would have applied if the transaction had not occurred.

(I) A county ~~elected~~ official or employee who accepts a financial transaction device payment in accordance with this section and any applicable state or local policies or rules is immune from personal liability for the final collection of such payments.

SECTION 2. That existing section 301.28 of the Revised Code is hereby repealed.

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*Speaker* \_\_\_\_\_ *of the House of Representatives.*

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*President* \_\_\_\_\_ *of the Senate.*

Passed \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

Approved \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

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*Governor.*

Sub. S. B. No. 241

127th G.A.

The section numbering of law of a general and permanent nature is complete and in conformity with the Revised Code.

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*Director, Legislative Service Commission.*

Filed in the office of the Secretary of State at Columbus, Ohio, on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A. D. 20\_\_\_\_.

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*Secretary of State.*

File No. \_\_\_\_\_ Effective Date \_\_\_\_\_