

CIVIL PRACTICE AND REMEDIES CODE

TITLE 4. LIABILITY IN TORT

CHAPTER 73. LIBEL

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 73.001. ELEMENTS OF LIBEL. A libel is a defamation expressed in written or other graphic form that tends to blacken the memory of the dead or that tends to injure a living person's reputation and thereby expose the person to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, or financial injury or to impeach any person's honesty, integrity, virtue, or reputation or to publish the natural defects of anyone and thereby expose the person to public hatred, ridicule, or financial injury.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

Sec. 73.002. PRIVILEGED MATTERS. (a) The publication by a newspaper or other periodical of a matter covered by this section is privileged and is not a ground for a libel action. This privilege does not extend to the republication of a matter if it is proved that the matter was republished with actual malice after it had ceased to be of public concern.

(b) This section applies to:

(1) a fair, true, and impartial account of:

(A) a judicial proceeding, unless the court has prohibited publication of a matter because in its judgment the interests of justice demand that the matter not be published;

(B) an official proceeding, other than a judicial proceeding, to administer the law;

(C) an executive or legislative proceeding (including a proceeding of a legislative committee), a proceeding in or before a managing board of an educational or eleemosynary institution supported from the public revenue, of the governing body of a city or town, of a county commissioners court, and of a public school board or a report of or debate and statements made in any of those proceedings; or

(D) the proceedings of a public meeting dealing

with a public purpose, including statements and discussion at the meeting or other matters of public concern occurring at the meeting; and

(2) reasonable and fair comment on or criticism of an official act of a public official or other matter of public concern published for general information.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

Sec. 73.003. MITIGATING FACTORS. (a) To determine the extent and source of actual damages and to mitigate exemplary damages, the defendant in a libel action may give evidence of the following matters if they have been specially pleaded:

(1) all material facts and circumstances surrounding the claim for damages and defenses to the claim;

(2) all facts and circumstances under which the libelous publication was made; and

(3) any public apology, correction, or retraction of the libelous matter made and published by the defendant.

(b) To mitigate exemplary damages, the defendant in a libel action may give evidence of the intention with which the libelous publication was made if the matter has been specially pleaded.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

Sec. 73.004. LIABILITY OF BROADCASTER. (a) A broadcaster is not liable in damages for a defamatory statement published or uttered in or as a part of a radio or television broadcast by one other than the broadcaster unless the complaining party proves that the broadcaster failed to exercise due care to prevent the publication or utterance of the statement in the broadcast.

(b) In this section, "broadcaster" means an owner, licensee, or operator of a radio or television station or network of stations and the agents and employees of the owner, licensee, or operator.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

Sec. 73.005. TRUTH A DEFENSE. (a) The truth of the statement in the publication on which an action for libel is based

is a defense to the action.

(b) In an action brought against a newspaper or other periodical or broadcaster, the defense described by Subsection (a) applies to an accurate reporting of allegations made by a third party regarding a matter of public concern.

(c) This section does not abrogate or lessen any other remedy, right, cause of action, defense, immunity, or privilege available under the Constitution of the United States or this state or as provided by any statute, case, or common law or rule.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 191 (S.B. 627), Sec. 1, eff. May 28, 2015.

Sec. 73.006. OTHER DEFENSES. This chapter does not affect the existence of common law, statutory law, or other defenses to libel.

Acts 1985, 69th Leg., ch. 959, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1985.

SUBCHAPTER B. CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION BY PUBLISHER

Sec. 73.051. SHORT TITLE. This subchapter may be cited as the Defamation Mitigation Act. This subchapter shall be liberally construed.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. 1759), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.052. PURPOSE. The purpose of this subchapter is to provide a method for a person who has been defamed by a publication or broadcast to mitigate any perceived damage or injury.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. 1759), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.053. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, joint venture, or other legal or

commercial entity. The term does not include a government or governmental subdivision, agency, or instrumentality.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.054. APPLICABILITY. (a) This subchapter applies to a claim for relief, however characterized, from damages arising out of harm to personal reputation caused by the false content of a publication.

(b) This subchapter applies to all publications, including writings, broadcasts, oral communications, electronic transmissions, or other forms of transmitting information.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.055. REQUEST FOR CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION. (a) A person may maintain an action for defamation only if:

(1) the person has made a timely and sufficient request for a correction, clarification, or retraction from the defendant; or

(2) the defendant has made a correction, clarification, or retraction.

(b) A request for a correction, clarification, or retraction is timely if made during the period of limitation for commencement of an action for defamation.

(c) If not later than the 90th day after receiving knowledge of the publication, the person does not request a correction, clarification, or retraction, the person may not recover exemplary damages.

(d) A request for a correction, clarification, or retraction is sufficient if it:

(1) is served on the publisher;

(2) is made in writing, reasonably identifies the person making the request, and is signed by the individual claiming to have been defamed or by the person's authorized attorney or agent;

(3) states with particularity the statement alleged to be false and defamatory and, to the extent known, the time and place of publication;

(4) alleges the defamatory meaning of the statement; and

(5) specifies the circumstances causing a defamatory meaning of the statement if it arises from something other than the express language of the publication.

(e) A period of limitation for commencement of an action under this section is tolled during the period allowed by Sections [73.056](#) and [73.057](#).

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.056. DISCLOSURE OF EVIDENCE OF FALSITY. (a) A person who has been requested to make a correction, clarification, or retraction may ask the person making the request to provide reasonably available information regarding the falsity of the allegedly defamatory statement not later than the 30th day after the date the person receives the request. Any information requested under this section must be provided by the person seeking the correction, clarification, or retraction not later than the 30th day after the date the person receives the request.

(b) If a correction, clarification, or retraction is not made, a person who, without good cause, fails to disclose the information requested under Subsection (a) may not recover exemplary damages, unless the publication was made with actual malice.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.057. TIMELY AND SUFFICIENT CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION. (a) A correction, clarification, or retraction is timely if it is made not later than the 30th day after receipt of:

(1) the request for the correction, clarification, or retraction; or

(2) the information requested under Section 73.056(a).

(b) A correction, clarification, or retraction is sufficient if it is published in the same manner and medium as the original publication or, if that is not possible, with a prominence and in a manner and medium reasonably likely to reach substantially the same audience as the publication complained of and:

(1) is publication of an acknowledgment that the statement specified as false and defamatory is erroneous;

(2) is an allegation that the defamatory meaning arises from other than the express language of the publication and the publisher disclaims an intent to communicate that meaning or to assert its truth;

(3) is a statement attributed to another person whom the publisher identifies and the publisher disclaims an intent to assert the truth of the statement; or

(4) is publication of the requestor's statement of the facts, as set forth in a request for correction, clarification, or retraction, or a fair summary of the statement, exclusive of any portion that is defamatory of another, obscene, or otherwise improper for publication.

(c) If a request for correction, clarification, or retraction has specified two or more statements as false and defamatory, the correction, clarification, or retraction may deal with the statements individually in any manner provided by Subsection (b).

(d) Except as provided by Subsection (e), a correction, clarification, or retraction is published with a prominence and in a manner and medium reasonably likely to reach substantially the same audience as the publication complained of if:

(1) it is published in a later issue, edition, or broadcast of the original publication;

(2) publication is in the next practicable issue, edition, or broadcast of the original publication because the publication will not be published within the time limits established for a timely correction, clarification, or retraction; or

(3) the original publication no longer exists and if the correction, clarification, or retraction is published in the newspaper with the largest general circulation in the region in which the original publication was distributed.

(e) If the original publication was on the Internet, a correction, clarification, or retraction is published with a prominence and in a manner and medium reasonably likely to reach substantially the same audience as the publication complained of if the publisher appends to the original publication the correction, clarification, or retraction.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.058. CHALLENGES TO CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION OR TO REQUEST FOR CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION. (a) If a defendant in an action under this subchapter intends to rely on a timely and sufficient correction, clarification, or retraction, the defendant's intention to do so, and the correction, clarification, or retraction relied on, must be stated in a notice served on the plaintiff on the later of:

(1) the 60th day after service of the citation; or

(2) the 10th day after the date the correction, clarification, or retraction is made.

(b) A correction, clarification, or retraction is timely and sufficient unless the plaintiff challenges the timeliness or sufficiency not later than the 20th day after the date notice under Subsection (a) is served. If a plaintiff challenges the timeliness or sufficiency, the plaintiff must state the challenge in a motion to declare the correction, clarification, or retraction untimely or insufficient served not later than the 30th day after the date notice under Subsection (a) is served on the plaintiff or the 30th day after the date the correction, clarification, or retraction is made, whichever is later.

(c) If a defendant intends to challenge the sufficiency or timeliness of a request for a correction, clarification, or retraction, the defendant must state the challenge in a motion to declare the request insufficient or untimely served not later than

the 60th day after the date of service of the citation.

(d) Unless there is a reasonable dispute regarding the actual contents of the request for correction, clarification, or retraction, the sufficiency and timeliness of a request for correction, clarification, or retraction is a question of law. At the earliest appropriate time before trial, the court shall rule, as a matter of law, whether the request for correction, clarification, or retraction meets the requirements of this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.059. EFFECT OF CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION. If a correction, clarification, or retraction is made in accordance with this subchapter, regardless of whether the person claiming harm made a request, a person may not recover exemplary damages unless the publication was made with actual malice.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.060. SCOPE OF PROTECTION. A timely and sufficient correction, clarification, or retraction made by a person responsible for a publication constitutes a correction, clarification, or retraction made by all persons responsible for that publication but does not extend to an entity that republished the information.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.061. ADMISSIBILITY OF EVIDENCE OF CORRECTION, CLARIFICATION, OR RETRACTION. (a) A request for a correction, clarification, or retraction, the contents of the request, and the acceptance or refusal of the request are not admissible evidence at a trial.

(b) The fact that a correction, clarification, or retraction was made and the contents of the correction,

clarification, or retraction are not admissible in evidence at trial except in mitigation of damages under Section 73.003(a)(3). If a correction, clarification, or retraction is received into evidence, the request for the correction, clarification, or retraction may also be received into evidence.

(c) The fact that an offer of a correction, clarification, or retraction was made and the contents of the offer, and the fact that the correction, clarification, or retraction was refused, are not admissible in evidence at trial.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. 1759), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2013.

Sec. 73.062. ABATEMENT. (a) A person against whom a suit is pending who does not receive a written request for a correction, clarification, or retraction, as required by Section 73.055, may file a plea in abatement not later than the 30th day after the date the person files an original answer in the court in which the suit is pending.

(b) A suit is automatically abated, in its entirety, without the order of the court, beginning on the 11th day after the date a plea in abatement is filed under Subsection (a) if the plea in abatement:

(1) is verified and alleges that the person against whom the suit is pending did not receive the written request as required by Section 73.055; and

(2) is not controverted in an affidavit filed by the person bringing the claim before the 11th day after the date on which the plea in abatement is filed.

(c) An abatement under Subsection (b) continues until the 60th day after the date that the written request is served or a later date agreed to by the parties. If a controverting affidavit is filed under Subsection (b)(2), a hearing on the plea in abatement will take place as soon as practical considering the court's docket.

(d) All statutory and judicial deadlines under the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure relating to a suit abated under Subsection (b), other than those provided in this section, will be stayed

during the pendency of the abatement period under this section.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 950 (H.B. [1759](#)), Sec. 2,
eff. June 14, 2013.