

CHAPTER 61

AN ACT concerning the solemnization of marriages and civil unions and amending R.S.37:1-13.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. R.S.37:1-13 is amended to read as follows:

Authorization to solemnize marriages and civil unions.

37:1-13. a. Authorization to solemnize marriages and civil unions.

Each judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, each judge of a federal district court, United States magistrate, judge of a municipal court, judge of the Superior Court, judge of the Tax Court, administrative law judge, retired judge of the Superior Court or Tax Court, retired administrative law judge, or judge of the Superior Court or Tax Court, the former County Court, the former County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, or the former County District Court who has resigned in good standing, surrogate of any county, county clerk, and any mayor or former mayor not currently serving on the municipal governing body or the deputy mayor when authorized by the mayor, or chairman of any township committee or village president of this State, every member of the clergy of every religion, and any civil celebrant who is certified by the Secretary of State to solemnize marriages or civil unions as set forth in subsection b. of this section, are hereby authorized to solemnize marriages or civil unions between such persons as may lawfully enter into the matrimonial relation or civil union; and every religious society, institution or organization in this State may join together in marriage or civil union such persons according to the rules and customs of the society, institution or organization.

b. A civil celebrant shall be authorized to solemnize marriages or civil unions if certified to do so by the Secretary of State.

(1) A civil celebrant shall receive a certification from the Secretary of State to solemnize marriages or civil unions if the celebrant:

(a) is at least 18 years of age and has graduated from a secondary school in this State or another state;

(b) has completed a civil celebrant course offered by a non-denominational or educational charitable organization that is registered with the State under the "Charitable Registration and Investigation Act," P.L.1994, c.16 (C.45:17A-18 et seq.), and which course:

(i) includes classes that meet weekly or with more frequency, either administered in person or by other means, over a period of not less than six months; and

(ii) educates on topics including, but not limited to, celebrant philosophy and history, ceremonial structure, and ceremonial presentations; and

(c) (i) submits a completed application form, developed by the secretary pursuant to regulation, which includes the name and address of the celebrant-applicant along with any other relevant information on the celebrant-applicant required by the secretary, and supporting documentation with respect to all certification requirements set forth in this subsection; and

(ii) pays to the Department of State, at the time of submitting the completed application, a fee of not less than \$50 or more than \$75, as determined by the secretary by regulation, to cover costs for processing applications, producing and issuing certificates, and maintaining records on applications and certificates issued or denied.

(2) (a) A celebrant-applicant shall not be authorized to solemnize marriages or civil unions until the application for certification is approved and the certificate received from the secretary.

(b) A civil celebrant who has received a certification from the secretary may have that certification revoked, through a hearing before an administrative law judge, if the secretary determines that any information provided in the celebrant's application was inaccurate or otherwise did not comply with the certification requirements set forth in this subsection. A civil celebrant subject to a revocation hearing before an administrative law judge or any appeal thereof shall not be authorized to solemnize marriages or civil unions, and shall only again be authorized to do so if a final determination is made permitting the civil celebrant to retain the certification.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved November 14, 2016.