



County Technical Assistance Service

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Jurisdiction of Chancery Court

Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other e-Li material.

Sincerely,

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Jurisdiction of Chancery Court

Reference Number: CTAS-491

The General Assembly determines the chancery court's jurisdiction, and may increase, decrease, or alter its jurisdiction. Tenn. Const., art. VI, § 8. Chancery courts "shall have all the powers, privileges, and jurisdiction properly and rightfully incident to a court of equity." T.C.A. § 16-11-101. This inherent jurisdiction is original and exclusive in cases of an equitable nature, where the debt or demand exceeds \$50, unless otherwise provided. It lacks jurisdiction in cases where the debt or demand is less than \$50, unless otherwise specifically provided. T.C.A. § 16-11-103. Although this inherent jurisdiction is exclusive, if no objection to jurisdiction is made, a circuit court may hear and determine such suits or may transfer the suit to chancery court. T.C.A. § 16-10-111.

Chancery courts exercise inherent jurisdiction, where the debt or demand exceeds \$50, in the following cases:

1. All actions resulting from accidents and mistakes;
2. All actions resulting from frauds, actual and constructive;
3. All actions resulting from trusts, express, constructive and resulting;
4. All actions for the specific performance of contracts;
5. All actions for the reformation, re-execution, rescission and surrender of written instruments;
6. All actions for an accounting, and for surcharging and falsifying accounts;
7. All actions between partners, and to wind up an insolvent partnership;
8. All actions for the administration and marshaling of assets;
9. All actions for subrogation and substitution;
10. All actions for the enforcement of liens created by mortgages, deeds of trust, sales of land on credit, or other equitable consideration;
11. All actions against minors in reference to their estates, not cognizable at law;
12. All actions by wards against guardians, executors, administrators and others, where an accounting or surcharging or falsifying an account is necessary;
13. All actions for an apportionment and contribution;
14. All actions for the marshaling of securities;
15. All actions for relief against forfeitures and penalties;
16. All actions for the redemption of land or other property;
17. All actions to have absolute deeds or bills of sale declared to be mortgages;
18. All actions for the construction and enforcement of wills and trusts;
19. All actions to obtain a set-off against a judgment in favor of a nonresident or insolvent;
20. All actions for the discovery and perpetuation of testimony;
21. All actions to compel claimants to interplead;
22. All actions for equitable attachments and receivers;
23. All actions where a *ne exeat republica* is sought;
24. All actions where an injunction is a substantial part of the relief sought;
25. All actions to remove clouds and quiet titles;
26. All actions for the establishment and execution of charities;
27. All actions for a new trial after a judgment at law;
28. All actions to have void judgments so declared, and to avoid voidable judgments;
29. All actions to execute decrees and to impeach decrees and judgments;
30. All actions to prevent the doing of an illegal or inequitable act to the injury of plaintiff's property rights, or interests, *quia timet*;
31. All actions for the exoneration or protection of sureties; and
32. All other actions where the defendant has done, or is doing, or is threatening to do, some inequitable act to the injury of the plaintiff, and there is no adequate remedy in any other court.

Gibson's Suits in Chancery (7th ed. Inman 1988), § 3.

Jurisdiction has been increased to encompass specific actions, including:

1. To aid judgment creditors to subject a debtor's property that cannot be reached by execution to the satisfaction of the judgment. T.C.A. § 16-11-104;
2. To decide all disputes between the state and corporations, their stockholders or creditors. T.C.A. § 16-11-105;

3. To aid creditors of a corporation, without obtaining a judgment at law, to attach the property of a corporation, and subject the same, by sale or otherwise, to the satisfaction of their debts, when the corporate franchises are not used, or have been granted to others. T.C.A. § 29-12-107;
 4. To decide all boundary line disputes. T.C.A. § 16-11-106(a);
 5. To enforce foreign judgments against the property of a nonresident debtor when the judgment creditor has exhausted his legal remedies. T.C.A. § 26-6-103 *et seq.*;
 6. To approve the sale of property of a minor or disabled person. T.C.A. § 34-1-116;
 7. To compel the distribution of estates where there are difficulties, complexities, or conflicting claims. T.C.A. § 30-2-710; and
 8. To remove the disability of a minor. T.C.A. § 29-31-101.
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