

SUBSCRIBE NOW and get **3 MONTHS** for the **PRICE OF 1** [SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Log In](#)

U.S. EDITION Tuesday, April 16, 2013 As of 7:42 PM EDT

- [Home](#) [World](#) [U.S.](#) [New York](#) [Business](#) [Tech](#) [Markets](#) [Market Data](#) [Opinion](#) [Life & Culture](#) [Real Estate](#) [Management](#) [C-Suite](#)
- [Seib & Wessel](#) [Politics & Policy](#) [Washington Wire](#) [Budget Battle](#) [Economy](#) [San Francisco Bay Area](#) [WSJ/NBC News Poll](#) [Journal Report](#) [Columns & Blogs](#)

TOP STORIES IN WSJ

1 of 12



Rescuers Scour Texas Blast Zone

2 of 12



Henninger: Clinging to Guns--- and Abortion

3 of 12



Rove: Steaming Toward the ObamaCare 'Train Wreck'

4 of 12



Video Provides Clues to Bomber

U.S. NEWS | April 16, 2013, 7:42 p.m. ET

New Checks on Alimony Pay

Florida, Other States Move to End Lifetime Spousal Support, Sparking Debate

[Article](#)

[Comments \(56\)](#)

[MORE IN US »](#)

[Email](#) [Print](#)

By [ARIAN CAMPO-FLORES](#)



Edward Linsmier for The Wall Street Journal

A Florida bill would end most lifetime alimony payments, a prospect that Ann Dwyer, above, said would cause her to lose her home

MIAMI—When Hector Torres got divorced in 2001, he said he felt blindsided by the alimony a Florida judge ordered him to pay his ex-wife: \$2,000 a month for the rest of his life. He was 34 years old at the time, meaning he faced the prospect of four or five decades of payments after a 13-year marriage.

"It was so mind-boggling to me," said Mr. Torres, now 46, a Web designer in Miami.

Now he is hoping a bill moving through the Florida legislature will offer him relief. The measure, which was passed by the state Senate and awaits a vote in the House this week, generally would end permanent alimony and create formulas to determine the amount and duration of awards.

Alimony payments wouldn't last more than half the length of a marriage. The maximum amount wouldn't exceed 38% of the payer's monthly gross income for marriages of 20 years or more, and less for shorter ones. And the bill could apply retroactively to existing arrangements like Mr. Torres's.

All For Less
Broadband and Unlimited Nationwide Voice
starting at \$75 / month for 12 months

[Get it now](#) 

THE NEW PORTFOLIO TOOL ON WSJ.COM:
ENTER YOUR BROKERAGE ACCOUNT DETAILS.
WE'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE NEWS AND INFO YOU NEED.

[LEARN MORE](#)

provided by LikeAssets

Available to WSJ.com Subscribers

Bundesbank Chief Warns Recovery May Take Years



Faster Growth Relies on a Bump-Free Road

Stimulus Fears on G-20 Agenda



China Vows Wider Yuan Movement

GET 3 MONTHS FOR THE PRICE OF 1 [SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

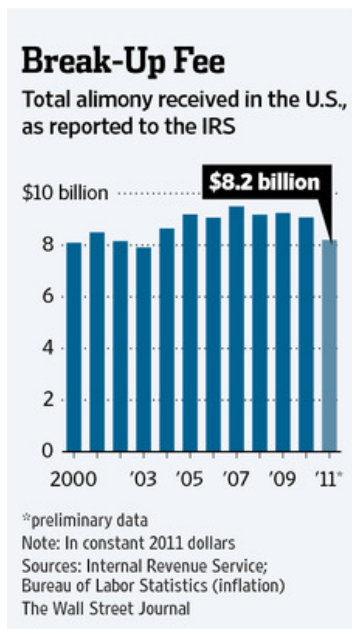
Don't Miss

[?]

Florida is one of a growing number of states where proponents of alimony-law changes are making an aggressive push. A similar measure took effect in Massachusetts last year, and comparable bills are pending in New Jersey, Connecticut, Colorado and Oregon.

The proposals have triggered contentious debate, pitting payers who decry what they call unjust awards against family-law attorneys who say the measures are punitive to women.

Supporters say alimony laws in many states tether former spouses indefinitely and are outdated at a time when women make up 47% of the labor force. They also complain that judges have too much leeway to fashion awards, yielding wildly disparate judgments.



"Divorce is supposed to separate your lives," said Robin DesCamp, president of Oregon Alimony Reform, whose husband pays spousal support to his ex-wife. "Alimony does not allow you to do that. It keeps a woman dependent."

Opponents say the measures apply a cookie-cutter approach to complicated situations and take away too much discretion from judges. While the proposals often provide for exceptions to the guidelines, the legal hurdles are high, detractors say.

The Florida bill "fails to allow judges to do their jobs and craft fair results," said Thomas Sasser, a family-law attorney in West Palm Beach and co-chairman of a committee studying the issue for the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. Making the measure

retroactive is especially "insidious," he said, since "it would create absolute chaos" as payers turn to the courts to try to terminate awards.

That possibility alarms Ann Dwyer. The 66-year-old resident of Longwood, near Orlando, raised two kids as a stay-at-home mother largely on the permanent alimony she was awarded 23 years ago. "This kind of bill punishes those of us who stayed home," she said.

After her divorce, Ms. Dwyer said she took accounting classes at a local community college and worked three jobs to make ends meet and save for retirement. Without alimony, which covers her monthly mortgage payment, "I'll lose this house," she said.

Audio

Arian Campo-Flores talks with The Wall Street Journal This Morning about the changes some states want to make.

00:00 | 00:00

Alimony dates back to English common law and traditionally was based on the assumption that husbands had a duty to support their wives until death, according to Mary Kay Kisthardt, a professor of law at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In the 1970s, laws were changed to award alimony

based on need rather than a woman's assumed dependence. These days, most of the payers are still men, though a growing number of women pay alimony.

Alimony laws in most states still allow for permanent awards, though former spouses can generally seek to modify the terms in court, Ms. Kisthardt said. But over time, she said, some states began placing limits on the duration of alimony, reasoning that the point should be to make people self-sufficient.



Scenes From Texas Explosion



What's a Bitcoin?



Plane Crashes Into the Sea, Injuring Many

More in US

[Video Provides Clues to Bomber](#)

[Senate Scuttles Gun Limits](#)

[Fertilizer-Plant Blast Injures Dozens in Texas](#)

[Labor Pick Faces Backlash Over His Aggressive Record](#)

[Man Is Arrested in Ricin Scare](#)

Most Popular

[Read](#) [Emailed](#) [Video](#) [Commented](#)

- [1. Video Provides Clues to Bomber](#)
- [2. Senate Scuttles Gun Limits](#)
- [3. Man Is Arrested in Ricin Scare](#)
- [4. Apple Takes Another Tumble](#)
- [5. Opinion: Henninger: Clinging to Guns—and Abortion](#)

Sell Your Settlement Now

Rates Up to 10%. Top Cash Offer for Settlement. Get a Free Quote Today
<http://www.jdsannuities.com>

"Top 2013" Work At Home

Read Our Review! Before Joining Any Work At Home Programs!
www.canada-grants.us/cn/1.0

Arrest Records Now Online

1) Enter Name and State. 2) Access Anyone's Public Records Instantly.
instantcheckmate.com

Content from our Sponsors [?]



SALARY.COM

15 Things You Should Never Do at Your Desk



BETTERMENT

Why You Should Max Out Your Retirement Accounts



DEXKNOWS

Before You Get That Tattoo, Consider This

Massachusetts added a new wrinkle with its overhaul law, which took effect last year and was supported by the state bar association. It created detailed formulas for alimony awards that some say favor the payers. Alimony-overhaul supporters hailed it as a victory, and new groups formed in other states to try to replicate it.

"It has become a model for states all over the country," said Steve Hitner, president of Massachusetts Alimony Reform. "We're getting a certain amount of consistency and predictability from courts."

That part is "sensible," said Anne Berger, a matrimonial lawyer in Lynnfield, Mass. But she said she worries about people like a 71-year-old female client whose ex-spouse is invoking the new law to try to cut off her payments. "Those people thought they had a deal and relied on it," Ms. Berger said.

The Massachusetts law inspired Thomas Leustek to form New Jersey Alimony Reform and push for a similar measure in his state. A 55-year-old professor at Rutgers University who got divorced in 2008, he said he owes spousal support until either he or his ex-wife dies. "Basically, I'm doomed to work for the rest of my life," he said.

A bill backed by his group would end permanent alimony, set formulas for spousal support and—most importantly for Mr. Leustek—end alimony when a payer reaches retirement age. "I want to retire with dignity," he said.

Write to Arian Campo-Flores at arian.campo-flores@wsj.com

A version of this article appeared April 17, 2013, on page A3 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: New Checks on Alimony Pay.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION
56 Comments, add yours »

MORE IN
US »

Email

Print

Order Reprints

THE NEW PORTFOLIO TOOL ON WSJ.COM:
ENTER YOUR BROKERAGE ACCOUNT DETAILS.
WE'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE NEWS AND INFO YOU NEED.

LEARN MORE

provided by LikeAssets

New Rule in FLORIDA:

(APR 2013): If You Pay For Car Insurance You Better Read This...
www.ConsumerFinanceDaily.com

Alimony

Go To Local.com To Find Local Businesses And Services Near You!
Local.com

Online Payment

Any payment around the world with LR, for all. No limit, live support!
www.mi-billetera.com

Public Arrest Records

1) Enter Name and State. 2) Access Full Background Checks Instantly.
www.InstantCheckmate.com

Don't Miss



Ford Apologizes for Offensive Ads in India



Meet the Biggest Wrap Stars at the Miami Airport



87-Year-Old Bond Girl Gets Award



Red Meat and Energy Drinks Spark New Health Worries