

# ASSEMBLY, No. 1595

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 213th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2008 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman NEIL M. COHEN**

**District 20 (Union)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes the “Celebrity Image Protection Act.”

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel



1 AN ACT concerning unauthorized use of a celebrity's image and  
2 supplementing Title 2A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

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

6

7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Celebrity  
8 Image Protection Act."

9

10 2. a. Any person who uses a deceased personality's name, voice,  
11 signature, photograph, or likeness, in any manner, on or in products,  
12 merchandise, or goods, or for purposes of advertising or selling, or  
13 soliciting purchases of, products, merchandise, goods, or services,  
14 without prior consent from the person specified in subsection h.,  
15 shall be liable for any damages sustained by the person injured as a  
16 result thereof.

17 b. In addition, in any action brought under this section, a person  
18 who violates the section shall be liable to the injured party in an  
19 amount equal to \$1,000 or the actual damages suffered by the  
20 injured party or parties as a result of the unauthorized use  
21 whichever is greater, and any profits from the unauthorized use that  
22 are attributable to the use and are not taken into account in  
23 computing the actual damages.

24 c. Punitive damages may be awarded to the injured party.

25 d. The prevailing party in any action under this section shall also  
26 be entitled to attorneys' fees and costs.

27 e. For purposes of this section, a play, book, magazine,  
28 newspaper, musical composition, audiovisual work, radio or  
29 television program, Internet broadcast, single and original work of  
30 art, work of political or newsworthy value, or an advertisement or  
31 commercial announcement for any of these works, shall not be  
32 considered a product, article of merchandise, good, or service if it is  
33 fictional or nonfictional entertainment, or a dramatic, literary, or  
34 musical work.

35 f. If a work that is protected under subsection e. of this section  
36 includes within it a use in connection with a product, article of  
37 merchandise, good, or service, this use shall not be exempt under  
38 this section, notwithstanding the unprotected use's inclusion in a  
39 work otherwise exempt under this section, if the claimant proves  
40 that this use is so directly connected with a product, article of  
41 merchandise, good, or service as to constitute an act of advertising,  
42 selling, or soliciting purchases of that product, article of  
43 merchandise, good, or service by the deceased personality without  
44 prior consent from the person specified in subsection h.

45 g. The rights recognized under this section are property rights,  
46 freely transferable, in whole or in part, by contract or by means of  
47 trust or testamentary documents, whether the transfer occurs before

1 the death of the deceased personality, by the deceased personality or  
2 his transferees, or, after the death of the deceased personality, by  
3 the person in whom the rights vest under this section or the  
4 transferees of that person.

5 h. The consent required by this section shall be exercisable by  
6 the person to whom the right of consent, or portion thereof, has  
7 been transferred in accordance with subsection g. of this section, or  
8 if no transfer has occurred, then by the person to whom the right of  
9 consent, or portion thereof, has passed in accordance with  
10 subsection i of this section.

11 i. Subject to subsection g. and h. of this section, after the death of  
12 any person, the rights under this section shall belong to the  
13 following persons and may be exercised, on behalf of and for the  
14 benefit of all of those persons, by those persons who, in the  
15 aggregate, are entitled to more than a one-half interest in the rights:

16 (1) The entire interest in those rights belong to the surviving  
17 spouse, civil union partner or domestic partner of the deceased  
18 personality unless there are any surviving children or grandchildren  
19 of the deceased personality, in which case one-half of the entire  
20 interest in those rights belong to the surviving spouse.

21 (2) The entire interest in those rights belong to the surviving  
22 children of the deceased personality and to the surviving children of  
23 any dead child of the deceased personality unless the deceased  
24 personality has a surviving spouse, in which case the ownership of a  
25 one-half interest in those rights is divided among the surviving  
26 children and grandchildren.

27 (3) If there is no surviving spouse, and no surviving children or  
28 grandchildren, then the entire interest in those rights belong to the  
29 surviving parent or parents of the deceased personality.

30 j. If any deceased personality did not transfer his rights under  
31 this section by contract, or by means of a trust or testamentary  
32 document, and there are no surviving persons as described in  
33 subsection i. of this section, then the rights set forth in subsection a.  
34 shall terminate.

35 k. A successor in interest to the rights of a deceased personality  
36 under this section or a licensee thereof may not recover damages for  
37 a use prohibited by this section that occurs before the successor in  
38 interest or licensee registers a claim of the rights under subsection l.  
39 of this section.

40 l. Any person claiming to be a successor in interest to the rights  
41 of a deceased personality under this section or a licensee thereof  
42 may register that claim with the Secretary of State on a form  
43 prescribed by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State shall  
44 impose a fee for the filing of a form pursuant to this section. The  
45 form shall be verified and shall include the name and date of death  
46 of the deceased personality, the name and address of the claimant,  
47 the basis of the claim, and the rights claimed.

1 m. Upon receipt and after filing of any document under this  
2 section, the Secretary of State shall post the document along with  
3 the entire registry of persons claiming to be a successor in interest  
4 to the rights of a deceased personality or a registered licensee under  
5 this section on the Secretary of State's official Internet website.  
6 The Secretary of State may microfilm or reproduce by other  
7 techniques any of the filings or documents and destroy the original  
8 filing or document. The microfilm or other reproduction of any  
9 document under the provisions of this section shall be admissible in  
10 any court of law.

11 n. Claims registered under this section shall be public records.

12 o. No action shall be brought under this section by reason of any  
13 use of a deceased personality's name, voice, signature, photograph,  
14 or likeness occurring after the expiration of 70 years after the death  
15 of the deceased personality.

16 p. As used in this section:

17 "Deceased personality" means any natural person whose name,  
18 voice, signature, photograph, or likeness has commercial value at  
19 the time of his death, whether or not during the lifetime of that  
20 natural person the person used his or her name, voice, signature,  
21 photograph, or likeness on or in products, merchandise or goods, or  
22 for purposes of advertising or selling, or solicitation of purchase of,  
23 products, merchandise, goods, or services. A "deceased personality"  
24 shall include, without limitation, any such natural person who has  
25 died within 70 years prior to January 1, 2008.

26 "Internet" means the international computer network of both  
27 federal and non-federal interoperable packet switched data  
28 networks.

29 "Photograph" means any photograph or photographic  
30 reproduction, still or moving, or any video tape or live television  
31 transmission, of any person, such that the deceased personality is  
32 readily identifiable. A deceased personality shall be deemed to be  
33 readily identifiable from a photograph when one who views the  
34 photograph with the naked eye can reasonably determine the  
35 identity of the person depicted in the photograph.

36 q. For purposes of this section, a use of a name, voice, signature,  
37 photograph, or likeness in connection with any news, public affairs,  
38 or sports broadcast or account, or any political campaign, shall not  
39 constitute a use for which consent is required under this section.

40 r. The use of a name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness in  
41 a commercial medium shall not constitute a use for which consent is  
42 required under this section solely because the material containing  
43 the use is commercially sponsored or contains paid advertising.  
44 Rather, it shall be a question of fact whether or not the use of the  
45 deceased personality's name, voice, signature, photograph, or  
46 likeness was so directly connected with the commercial sponsorship

1 or with the paid advertising as to constitute a use for which consent  
2 is required under this section.

3 s. Nothing in this section shall apply to the owners or employees  
4 of any medium used for advertising, including, but not limited to,  
5 newspapers, magazines, radio and television networks and stations,  
6 cable television systems, billboards, and transit ads, by whom any  
7 advertisement or solicitation in violation of this section is published  
8 or disseminated, unless it is established that the owners or  
9 employees had knowledge of the unauthorized use of the deceased  
10 personality's name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness as  
11 prohibited by this section.

12 t. The remedies provided for in this section shall be in addition to  
13 and not in lieu of any other action, injunctive relief or any other  
14 remedy available at law.

15 u. This section shall apply to the adjudication of liability and the  
16 imposition of any damages or other remedies in cases in which the  
17 liability, damages, and other remedies arise from acts occurring  
18 directly in this State. For purposes of this section, acts giving rise to  
19 liability shall be limited to the use, on or in products, merchandise,  
20 goods, or services, or the advertising or selling, or soliciting  
21 purchases of, products, merchandise, goods, or services prohibited  
22 by this section.

23

24 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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29 This bill would enact the "Celebrity Image Protection Act,"  
30 concerning the unauthorized use of a deceased celebrity's likeness.  
31 The bill is modeled after California's "Astaire Celebrity Protection  
32 Act." It would provide for a civil action for the unauthorized use of  
33 a deceased personality's name or image for commercial purposes.

34 Under the provisions of the bill, any person who uses a deceased  
35 personality's name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness, in any  
36 manner, on or in products, merchandise, or goods, or for purposes  
37 of advertising or selling, or soliciting purchases of, products,  
38 merchandise, goods, or services, without prior consent, would be  
39 liable for any damages sustained. The bill defines a "deceased  
40 personality" as any natural person whose name, voice, signature,  
41 photograph, or likeness has commercial value at the time of his  
42 death, whether or not during the lifetime of that natural person the  
43 person used his name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness on  
44 or in products, merchandise or goods, or for purposes of advertising  
45 or selling, or solicitation of purchase of, products, merchandise,  
46 goods, or services. A "deceased personality" includes, without

1 limitation, any such natural person who has died within 70 years  
2 prior to January 1, 2008.

3 The bill provides that in an action brought under the bill, the  
4 person would be liable to injured party in the amount equal to  
5 \$1,000 or the actual damages suffered by the injured party as the  
6 result of the unauthorized use, whichever is greater. Punitive  
7 damages may be awarded and the prevailing party would be entitled  
8 to attorney fees and costs under the provisions of the bill.

9 The rights recognized under the bill are property rights, freely  
10 transferable, in whole or in part, by contract or by means of trust or  
11 testamentary documents, whether the transfer occurs before the  
12 death of the deceased personality, by the deceased personality or his  
13 transferees, or, after the death of the deceased personality, by the  
14 person in whom the rights vest under the bill.

15 In addition, the bill requires any person claiming to be a  
16 successor in interest to the rights of a deceased personality to  
17 register a claim with the Secretary of State. Upon receipt of the  
18 claim, the Secretary of State shall post the document, along with the  
19 entire registry of persons claiming to be a successor in interest to  
20 the rights of the deceased personality, on the Secretary's Internet  
21 website.

22 The bill provides that no action may be brought after the  
23 expiration of 70 years from the death of the deceased celebrity.