

§ 28A-2-4. Subject matter jurisdiction of the clerk of superior court in estate proceedings.

(a) The clerks of superior court of this State, as ex officio judges of probate, shall have original jurisdiction of estate proceedings. Except as provided in subdivision (4) of this subsection, the jurisdiction of the clerk of superior court is exclusive. Estate proceedings include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Probate of wills.
- (2) Granting and revoking of letters testamentary and letters of administration, or other proper letters of authority for the administration of estates.
- (3) Determination of the elective share for a surviving spouse as provided in G.S. 30-3.1.
- (4) Proceedings to ascertain heirs or devisees, to approve settlement agreements pursuant to G.S. 28A-2-10, to determine questions of construction of wills, to determine priority among creditors, to determine whether a person is in possession of property belonging to an estate, to order the recovery of property of the estate in possession of third parties, and to determine the existence or nonexistence of any immunity, power, privilege, duty, or right. Any party or the clerk of superior court may file a notice of transfer of a proceeding pursuant to this subdivision to the Superior Court Division of the General Court of Justice as provided in G.S. 28A-2-6(h). In the absence of a transfer to superior court, Article 26 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes shall apply to an estate proceeding pending before the clerk of superior court to the extent consistent with this Article.

(b) Nothing in this section shall affect the right of a person to file an action in the Superior Court Division of the General Court of Justice for declaratory relief under Article 26 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes. In the event that either the petitioner or the respondent in an estate proceeding requests declaratory relief under Article 26 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes, either party may move for a transfer of the proceeding to the Superior Court Division of the General Court of Justice as provided in Article 21 of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes. In the absence of a removal to superior court, Article 26 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes shall apply to an estate proceeding to the extent consistent with this Article.

(c) Without otherwise limiting the jurisdiction of the Superior Court Division of the General Court of Justice, the clerk of superior court shall not have jurisdiction under subsection (a) or (b) of this section or G.S. 28A-2-5 of the following:

- (1) Actions by or against creditors or debtors of an estate, except as provided in Article 19 of this Chapter.
- (2) Actions involving claims for monetary damages, including claims for breach of fiduciary duty, fraud, and negligence.
- (3) Caveats, except as provided under G.S. 31-36.
- (4) Proceeding to determine proper county of venue as provided in G.S. 28A-3-2.
- (5) Recovery of property transferred or conveyed by a decedent with intent to hinder, delay, or defraud creditors, pursuant to G.S. 28A-15-10(b).
- (6) Actions for reformation or modification of wills under Article 10 of Chapter 31 of the General Statutes. (2011-344, s. 4; 2012-194, s. 12; 2017-102, s. 9; 2017-152, ss. 2(a), 3; 2019-243, s. 23.)