### CHAPTER 891

#### PRESUMPTIONS

891.03 Lists of state lands. All statements or lists of lands which shall have been certified by the president of the United States, or by any other officer of the government thereof, as conveyed to the state under or by any act of congress, being produced by the proper custodians thereof, shall be received in all cases as presumptive evidence that the title of the lands therein described became thereby vested in the state.

891.04 Certificate as to public lands. The certificate of the executive secretary appointed under s. 24.55 under the official seal, that any specified piece or tract of land belongs to or is mortgaged to the state, or that the state has any interest, legal or equitable, in that land shall be presumptive evidence of the facts so stated. The certificate of the secretary of natural resources under the official seal of the department that authority has been given to any person, naming the person, to seize timber or other materials specified in ch. 26 shall be presumptive evidence of the fact so stated.

**History:** 1971 c. 164; 1979 c. 34 s. 2102 (2) (a); 1979 c. 176; 1993 a. 16.

891.05 Land patents by state officers. Every patent which shall have been executed and delivered by the commissioners of school and university lands or by the commissioners of public lands, purporting to convey any land, and every deed or patent which shall have been executed and delivered by the governor, purporting to convey any lands granted to the state by the United States, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated and that the grantee named therein became vested thereby at the date thereof with an absolute title in fee to the lands therein described.

891.06 Deed on judicial sale. Every conveyance of land or any estate or interest therein executed by any sheriff, referee, receiver or other person, in pursuance of a sale made by virtue of any judgment, order, license or execution of any court of record in this state, and which shall have been recorded in the proper county, as well as such record, shall be received, as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated and that the title, estate or interest in the land therein described, which such conveyance purports to convey, of every person whom it purports to affect passed to and vested in the grantee therein at the date thereof or at such previous date as such conveyance purports to fix for that purpose.

891.07 Certificate of judicial sale. Every certificate of sale of land or any estate or interest therein executed by any sheriff, referee, receiver or other person, in pursuance of a sale made by virtue of any judgment, order, license or execution of any court of record in this state, and the record thereof, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

891.08 Records showing revenue stamps. Whenever the record, in the office of a register of deeds, of any conveyance or of any instrument whatever, upon which revenue stamps may have been at any time required to be affixed by any act of congress, shall show such stamps or any of them, more or less, to have been affixed, it shall be presumptive evidence that such conveyance or instrument had properly affixed to it the number and denomination of stamps required by law.

891.09 Record of births, stillbirths, fetal deaths, deaths and marriages. (1) Records as evidence. The record of any marriage, birth, stillbirth, fetal death or death kept in the office of any register of deeds or local health officer of a local health department, as defined in s. 250.01 (4) (a) 2. or 3. or (b), or in the state bureau of vital statistics shall be received as presumptive evidence of the marriage, birth, stillbirth, fetal death or death so recorded.

(2) Church and doctor's records. Any church, parish or baptismal record, and any record of a physician or a person authorized to solemnize marriages, in which record are preserved the facts relating to any birth, stillbirth, fetal death, marriage or death, including the names of the persons, dates, places and other material facts, may be admitted as prima facie evidence of any fact aforesaid. But such record must be produced by its proper custodian and be supported by the custodian's oath that it is such a record as it purports to be and is genuine to the best of the custodian's knowledge and belief.

(3) Certificates of foreign births, etc. Official certificates of births, marriages or deaths, issued in foreign countries in which such births, marriages or deaths have occurred, purporting to be founded on books of record, properly authenticated, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts in such certificates stated.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 59 W (2d) R6 (1973); 1993 a. 27, 486.

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**Wisconsin Statutes Archive.**
891.10 Village records. The papers, documents and orders relating to the organization and incorporation or the alteration of the boundaries of any village, being recorded in the office of the proper register of deeds pursuant to law, and such record and also the record thereof in the office of the village clerk shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

891.11 County records as to taxation. (1) All books and files in the office of any county treasurer or county clerk, all assessments and tax rolls and certificates, all notices required to be published or posted by the county treasurer or county clerk, and the proofs of publication or posting filed in the office of either, pursuant to any law relating to the assessment or collection of taxes or to lands included in a tax certificate under s. 74.57, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts therein stated.

(2) A transcript of so much of said books, files and records, as relates to the assessment or sale for taxes of any parcel of land in any specified year or years shall be received in evidence with the same effect as the originals and as presumptive evidence of the facts stated in such certificate, when certified in substantially the following form:

I hereby certify that the annexed and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of all books, records, papers, files and proceedings of every name and nature on file or of record in my office relating in any wise to the assessment of taxes upon or to the sale for taxes of the following described lands .... situated in the county of ...., state of Wisconsin, for the year (or years) A.D. .... and of the whole thereof. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand this .... day of ...., A.D. ..... County Clerk (or Treasurer) of .... county.


891.12 Land office receipt. The receiver’s receipt or certificate of purchase of public lands, signed by the receiver, and the official certificate of any register or receiver of the entry or purchase of any land or the location of any land by any land warrant shall be received, when held by the original claimant, or the original claimant’s heirs or assigns, as presumptive evidence that the title to the lands therein described passed to and is vested in the person therein named, or the named person’s heirs or assigns, except when, at the time of such entry or purchase, the land was owned or occupied by any person as mineral ground on which discoveries of mineral ores had been made.

History: 1993 a. 486.

891.14 State land office certification of title. A certificate of the executive secretary of the board of commissioners of public lands, or any one of the commissioners of the public lands shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts stated, and that the person named became vested at the date stated with an absolute title in fee to the lands described when it is substantially in the following form:

Office of the Commissioners of the Public Lands, Madison, Wis., ..... A.D. ..... I hereby certify that from the books, files and records of the office of the commissioners of public lands it appears that on the .... day of ...., A.D. ..... the following described real estate, situate in the state of Wisconsin, .... was duly transferred by the United States to the state of Wisconsin, and that on the .... day of ...., A.D. ..... the above described real estate was duly transferred by the state of Wisconsin to ..... In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of the commissioners of the public lands this .... day of ...., A.D. ..... History: 1971 c. 164; 1975 c. 41 s. 51; 1993 a. 16.

891.16 Certificate of land transfers. A certificate by the secretary of state, under the great or lesser seal, to any facts which appear from the books, files and records in the secretary of state’s office or the office of the commissioners of public lands in regard to the grant, conveyance or transfer of any land by the United States to the territory or state of Wisconsin, and also in regard to the sale, conveyance or transfer of any such land by said territory or state shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

History: 1993 a. 486.

891.17 Certificate of adjutant general. A certificate by the adjutant general to any facts which appear from the books, files and records in the adjutant general’s office shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

History: 1993 a. 486.

891.18 Affidavits of service. Whenever any notice or writing is by law authorized or required to be served the affidavit of the person serving it, setting forth the facts necessary to show that it was duly served, shall be presumptive proof that such notice or writing was duly served. But this section shall not apply to any service where another way of proving such service is expressly prescribed by law.

See note to 801.11, citing Danielson v. Brody Seating Co. 71 W2d 424, 238 NW2d 531.

891.20 Articles of incorporation, presumptions. Except as provided in s. 180.0203 (2), any charter or patent of incorporation which shall have been issued by the governor, secretary of state or department of financial institutions, or by any combination, to any corporation under any law of the state; any certificate of organization or association of any corporation or joint stock company; the articles of organization of a limited liability company; the articles of association or organization of any corporation, or a certified copy thereof, which shall have been filed or recorded in the office of the secretary of state or with the department of financial institutions, or recorded in the office of any register of deeds or filed or recorded in the office of any clerk of the circuit court under any law of the state; any certificate or resolution for the purpose of amendment, and every amendment in any form, of the charter, patent, certificate or articles of association or organization or of the name, corporate powers or purposes of any corporation or limited liability company, filed or recorded in any of the departments or offices and a certified copy of any such document so filed or recorded shall be received as conclusive evidence of the existence of the corporation, limited liability company or joint stock company mentioned therein, or of the due amendment of the charter, patent, certificate or articles of association or organization thereof in all cases where such facts are only collaterally involved; and as presumptive evidence thereof and of the facts therein stated in all other cases.

History: 1993 a. 112, 301, 491; 1995 a. 27, 400.

891.21 Affidavit of notice of corporate meeting. Whenever any corporation or limited liability company notice is given, posted or served, an affidavit of the person who gave, posted or served the same, specifying the manner and time of doing so, annexed to a copy of such notice, may be filed with the clerk or secretary of the corporation or limited liability company, and when so filed, the original or certified copies thereof, shall be presumptive evidence in all cases of the facts contained in such affidavit.

History: 1993 a. 112.

891.22 Certificate of insurance assessment. Whenever an action is brought by any mutual insurance company to collect any assessment, the certificate of the secretary of said company, specifying such assessment, the amount due said company by means thereof, and that notice thereof was given the person liable therefor, shall be received as presumptive evidence of the facts so certified.

891.23 Copies of insurance books. Copies of the entries in the books of any life or mutual benefit insurance corporation or association engaged in doing business on the level premium or assessment plan, together with statements verified by the custo-
dian of the books, showing the number of members insured in or belonging to the corporation or association, and the number of members in each class or grade thereof, and the aggregate amount which would be due from them upon a single assessment, and that the copies are true and are taken from the regular books of the corporation or association used and kept for the transaction of its business, and that the books are now in his or her custody or under his or her control, shall be received in all proceedings as prima facie evidence of the entries or statements. No officer of any such business, and that the books are now in his or her custody or under his or her control, shall be received in all proceedings as prima facie evidence of the entries or statements. No officer of any such business, and that the books are now in his or her custody or under

891.25 Presumptions as to signatures. When any written instrument constitutes the subject of the action or proceeding or when the signing of such instrument is put in issue and the instrument purports to have been signed, the instrument itself is proof that it was signed until denied by the oath or affidavit of the person by whom it purports to have been signed or by a pleading. This section does not extend to an instrument purporting to have been signed by a person who died before proof is required.


891.27 Effect of seal. A seal upon an executory instrument shall be received as only presumptive evidence of a sufficient consideration.

891.28 Area of towns and counties. Whenever the total area of towns or counties shall be in question, townships not returned as fractional by the surveys under which the public lands were sold by the United States, shall be held to be 6 miles square; and townships returned as fractional shall be held to contain the areas shown by such surveys or the plats thereof.

891.29 Allegations of partnership. Whenever in any action or proceeding a party shall allege in pleadings that named persons were partners at any particular time, or that as such partners they used any particular partnership name or style under which business was done, such averments shall be taken to be true unless expressly denied by the affidavit of the opposite party or someone in the opposite party’s behalf or by the opposite party’s pleading, within the usual time of pleading.


891.30 Joint liability. In actions or proceedings upon written contracts alleged to have been executed by the defendants, proof of the joint liability of the defendants shall not be required to entitle the plaintiff to judgment unless such execution is denied by an answer.


891.31 Corporate existence. In an action or proceeding by or against any corporation or limited liability company, it shall not be necessary to prove the existence of such corporation or limited liability company unless its existence is specially denied by an answer.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 585, 769 (1975); 1993 a. 112.

891.32 Allegation as to executor, guardian, etc. Whenever a plaintiff shall sue as an executor, administrator, guardian or trustee and shall allege in the complaint appointment as such, and, if appointed in another state or foreign country, the filing or recording of the authenticated copy of the appointment, as required by the laws of this state, such allegations shall be taken as true unless specifically denied by the defendant by the answer.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 585, 769 (1975); 1975 c. 218.

891.33 Proof of malice in slander and libel. If the defendant in any action for slander or libel shall set up in the defendant’s answer that the words spoken or published were true, such answer shall not be proof of the malice alleged in the complaint.

History: 1993 a. 486; see Note to 802.03, citing Converters Equip. Corp. v. Condes Corp. 80 W (2d) 257, 258 NW (2d) 700.

891.34 Pre-
be presumptive evidence that he or she did receive the summons for service on the day in such certificate named.

History: 1993 a. 486.

891.39 Presumption as to whether a child is marital or nonmarital; self-crimination; birth certificates. (1) (a) Whenever it is established in an action or proceeding that a child was born to a woman while she was the lawful wife of a specified man, any party asserting in such action or proceeding that the husband was not the father of the child shall have the burden of proving that assertion by a clear and satisfactory preponderance of the evidence. In all such actions or proceedings the husband and the wife are competent to testify as witnesses to the facts. The court or judge in such cases shall appoint a guardian ad litem to appear for and represent the child whose paternity is questioned.

(b) In actions affecting the family, in which the question of paternity is raised, and in paternity proceedings, the court, upon being satisfied that the parties to the action are unable to adequately compensate any such guardian ad litem for the guardian ad litem’s services and expenses, shall then make an order specifying the guardian ad litem’s compensation and expenses, which compensation and expenses shall be paid as provided in s. 967.06.

If the court orders a county to pay the compensation of the guardian ad litem, the amount ordered may not exceed the compensation paid to private attorneys under s. 977.08 (4m) (b).

(2) (a) The mother of the child shall not be excused or privileged from testifying fully in any action or proceeding mentioned in sub. (1) in which the determination of whether the child is a marital or nonmarital child is involved or in issue, when ordered to testify by a court of record or any judge thereof; but she shall not be prosecuted or subjected to any penalty or forfeiture for or on account of testifying or producing evidence, except for perjury committed in giving the testimony.

(b) The immunity provided under par. (a) is subject to the restrictions under s. 972.085.

(3) If any court under this section adjudges a child to be a nonmarital child, the clerk of court shall report the facts to the state registrar, who shall issue a new birth certificate showing the correct facts as found by the court, and shall dispose of the original, with the court’s report attached under s. 69.15 (3). If the husband is a party to the action and the court makes a finding as to whether or not the husband is the father of the child, such finding shall be conclusive in all other courts of this state.


The courts’ power to appropriate compensation for court-appointed counsel is necessary for the effective operation of the judicial system. In ordering compensation for court ordered attorneys, a court should abide by the s. 977.08 (4m) rate when it is necessary to secure effective counsel. Friederich v. Dane County Circuit Ct., 192 W (2d) 1, 531 NW (2d) 32 (1995).

891.395 Presumption as to time of conception. In any paternity proceeding, in the absence of a valid birth certificate indicating the birth weight, the mother shall be competent to testify as to the birth weight of the child whose paternity is at issue, and where the child whose paternity is at issue weighed 5 1/2 pounds or more at the time of its birth, the testimony of the mother as to the weight shall be presumptive evidence that the child was a full term child, unless competent evidence to the contrary is presented to the court. The conception of the child shall be presumed to have occurred within a span of time extending from 240 days to 300 days before the date of its birth, unless competent evidence to the contrary is presented to the court.

History: 1979 c. 352.

Where competent medical testimony limited conception period to 2 weeks, testimony of sexual relations outside period was inadmissible unless offered by mother. State ex rel. J. A. S. v. M. E. S., 142 W. (2d) 300, 418 NW (2d) 32 (Cl. App. 1987).

Factsfinder can find date of conception other than date asserted either by mother or putative father. In re Paternity of A. M. C., 144 W (2d) 621, 424 NW (2d) 707 (1988).

891.40 Artificial insemination. (1) If, under the supervision of a licensed physician and with the consent of her husband, a wife is inseminated artificially with semen donated by a man not her husband, the husband of the mother at the time of the conception of the child shall be the natural father of a child conceived. The husband’s consent must be in writing and signed by him and his wife. The physician shall certify their signatures and the date of the insemination, and shall file the husband’s consent with the department of health and family services, where it shall be kept confidential and in a sealed file except as provided in s. 46.03 (7) (bn). However, the physician’s failure to file the consent form does not affect the legal status of father and child. All papers and records pertaining to the insemination, whether part of the permanent record of a court or of a file held by the supervising physician or elsewhere, may be inspected only upon an order of the court for good cause shown.

(2) The donor of semen provided to a licensed physician for use in artificial insemination of a woman other than the donor’s wife is not the natural father of a child conceived, bears no liability for the support of the child and has no parental rights with regard to the child.

History: 1979 c. 352; 1983 a. 447; 1995 a. 27 s. 9126 (19).

891.405 Presumption of paternity based on acknowledgment. A man is presumed to be the natural father of a child if he and the mother have acknowledged paternity under s. 69.15 (3) (b) 1 or 3, and no other man is presumed to be the father under s. 891.41.

History: 1989 a. 212; 1993 a. 213.

891.41 Presumption of paternity based on marriage of the parties. A man is presumed to be the natural father of a child if any of the following applies:

(1) He and the child’s natural mother are or have been married to each other and the child is conceived or born after marriage and before the granting of a decree of legal separation, annulment or divorce between the parties.

(2) He and the child’s natural mother were married to each other after the child was born but he and the child’s natural mother had a relationship with one another during the period of time within which the child was conceived and no other man has been adjudicated to be the father or presumed to be the father of the child under sub. (1).


891.43 Relief from destruction of public records. (1) RECORdING instruments. If the records of any county are destroyed, any instrument in writing or certified copy of such instrument which affects title to land in that county and which has been recorded may be reordered. Upon reordering, the register of deeds shall record the certificate of the previous record, and the date of filing for record appearing in the original certificate shall be the date of the record. Copies of any record of such instrument, certified by the register of deeds, shall be received in evidence and have the same effect as certified copies of the original record.

(2) COURT RECORDS. If, in any court of record in this or any other state or of the United States, there is any instrument in writing, or certified copy of such instrument, which affects title to land in any county of this state where the records have been destroyed, a copy of the instrument certified by the clerk of such court of record may be made and recorded in the county where the records have been destroyed. Upon recording the certified copy the register of deeds shall record all attached certificates, and if any certificates show the previous recording of the instrument in the county where the records have been destroyed, the date of filing appearing in the certificate shall be taken as the date of the record. Copies of any record, certified by the register of deeds, shall be received
891.44 Presumption of lack of contributory negligence for infant minor. It shall be conclusively presumed that an infant minor who has not reached the age of 7 shall be incapable of being guilty of contributory negligence or of any negligence whatsoever.

Refusal to instruct under 891.44 was not error where no issue of plaintiff’s negligence was presented by the pleadings or by evidence. Wagner v. American Family Mut. Ins. Co. 65 W (2d) 243, 222 NW (2d) 652.

891.45 Presumption of employment connected disease. In any proceeding involving the application by a municipal fire fighter or his or her beneficiary for disability or death benefits under s. 66.191, 1981 stats., or s. 40.65 (2) or any pension or retirement system applicable to fire fighters, where at the time of death or filing of application for disability benefits the deceased or disabled fire fighter had served a total of 5 years as a fire fighter and a qualifying medical examination given prior to the time of his or her joining the department showed no evidence of heart or respiratory impairment or disease, and where the disability or death is found to be caused by heart or respiratory impairment or disease, such finding shall be presumptive evidence that such impairment or disease was caused by such employment. In this section, “municipal fire fighter” includes any person designated as primarily a fire fighter under s. 61.66 (2) and any person under s. 61.66 whose duties as a fire fighter during the 5-year qualifying period took up at least two-thirds of his or her working hours.

History: 1977 c. 83; 1981 c. 278 a. 6; 1983 a. 191 s. 6; 1987 a. 399; 1987 a. 403 s. 256.

891.46 Mailed service. Unless otherwise specifically provided by statute or rule adopted under s. 751.12, summonses, citations, notices, motions and other papers required or authorized to be served by mail in judicial or administrative proceedings are presumed to be served when deposited in the U.S. mail with properly affixed evidence of prepaid postage.


Judicial Council Note, 1995:

The purpose of this statute is to overrule the statement in Bockel v. State Highway Commission, 36 Wis. 2d 440, 444, 153 N.W. 2d 610, 612 (1967), that “as a general rule in the absence of the statutory provision, … service of process would not become effective until the party received it.” The creation of this rule does not affect the presumptions and shifting of burdens of mailing articulated in State ex rel. Flores v. State, 183 Wis. 2d 587, 516 N.W. 2d 362 (1994).