

The (i) mutability of the name: innovations in the public records law and the possibility of changing one's name administratively

Summary

The main objective of this article is to analyze the changes brought about by Law 14.382/2022, which brought about significant changes to the Public Records Law (Law 6.015/1973), with an emphasis on the possibility of changing one's name administratively. This study begins with a brief analysis of the concept of the name, as well as taking a historical look at its social function up to the present day. It then discusses the name as a personality right and its relationship with the principle of human dignity, as well as the characteristics inherent in the name as a subjective personality right. It then studies the immutability of the name adopted before the legislative changes that took place in 2022 and the causes that allowed the name to be changed. To this end, the study was carried out using bibliographic sources, scientific articles, magazines and case law related to the subject. Finally, it is concluded that, based on the analysis of the prename as a right to personality, the individual's will and well-being began to be taken into account. However, based on these changes and the legal innovation in the Brazilian legal system, it became fully possible to change the name extra judicially, with legal certainty, thus solidifying the principle of human dignity.

Keywords: civil name, personality rights, legislative innovation, extrajudicial

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present the issue of the innovation of Law No. 14.382/2022, which brought significant changes to the Public Records Law (Law 6.015/1973), making it possible to change one's name out of court, without a deadline and without motivation. On the other hand, the name could only be changed within the one-year limitation period, after reaching the age of civil majority or through legal action, provided that the need and reasons for the change were justified, as provided for in articles 56 and 57 of Law 6.015/1973. However, with the evolution of society and the recognition of the civil name as a right of the personality, and consequently a right inherent to the human person, the procedure for changing one's name has become more accessible, faster and more dignified. Finally, taking into account the large number of people who have already changed their names since Law 14.382/2022, it is clear that the new way of changing one's name guarantees the dignity of the human person to those who seek to change a relevant right.

Civil name

According to the Michaelis dictionary, the name has, among other definitions, that of "anthroponym that is given to a newborn person and that constitutes one of the fundamental elements of their individualization (it can also have components); baptismal name; antenome, prenome".¹ In other words, the civil name is the union of identifying terms with the purpose of identifying and individualizing people in society, so that they can exercise their rights and have them protected by the State, being one of the greatest attributes of personality. In this sense jurist Luiz Guilherme Loureiro² teaches that:

The name, along with other attributes, has the mission of ensuring the identification and individuation of people and, for this reason, it is like a label placed on each one of us. Each individual represents a sum of rights and obligations, a legal, moral, economic and social value.² It is therefore important that

these values appear as a simple statement of the name of their owner, without any possible misunderstanding or confusion.

On the other hand, Pontes De Miranda³ teaches that "(...) names were creations of life (...)", and the emergence of the name occurred in primitive civilizations, with the need identify and distinguish things and living beings from other that inhabited a certain place. To this end, the use of a single word was sufficient to distinguish one subject from another.⁴ However, with the evolution of societies and the increase in the number of people, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish one person from another simply by using a single name. Therefore, it was necessary to make individuals more specific, linking the individual name with the family of origin and/or the place of origin.⁴ In fact, people began to use their baptismal name with an occasional surname, and it was only in the Modern Age that the practice of composing the civil name with a first and last name was adopted (although it was not obligatory). And because of the French Revolution, the name was legally protected in the German Civil Code of 1900,⁵ acquiring, in addition to the already notorious social relevance for identifying individuals, legal relevance. In this sense, the law confers two functions on the name, namely the identity function, which serves to differentiate individuals from each other in their private lives, and the public function, which acts in the subject's civil life, enabling them to acquire rights and contract obligations.⁶

According to the teachings of Kumpel⁷:

In fact, it is of great interest to the community and to the state itself that people can be distinguished from one another. Thus, if on the one hand the name acquires special relevance in the private sphere, in the context of the protection of an isonomic system, which guarantees everyone the right to identity, it acquires, on the other hand, no less importance in the public sphere, by enabling the identification of individuals within society for the correct attribution of rights and obligations.⁷

Currently, the civil name has some elements, classified as essential/mandatory and non-essential/optional. Silva⁸ teaches that “in Brazil the compound name is adopted, with obligatory elements (prenome and surname) and optional elements (agnomen; pseudonym; cognomen)”. Regarding the legal nature of the name, some theories have tried to define it, the main ones being: property theory, negativist theory, state theory and personality right theory, the latter of which was adopted by the Civil Code, with the name consisting of a personality right.⁹ Therefore, the civil name has the legal nature of a very personal and non-transferable right, closely correlated to the respective identity and individuality of the subject, making it a mandatory element in the birth registration, under the terms of art. 54 of the Public Records Law.

On subject, Brandelli¹⁰ states that:

There is a legal obligation for every person to have a name, an obligation that derives from a human need arising from life in society, which makes it possible to identify the person as the unique being they are, assigning them the rights they have to full and integral development and meeting their minimum needs, as well as their duties.¹⁰

However, it should be noted that there are some forms of protection provided by the right to a name, the right to a name, the right to a name and the right to take a name. The first form concerns the identification and individualization of the subject in society.¹⁰ On the other hand, the second form refers to the right of a person, after their birth registration, to have a certain and determined name.¹¹ The right to take a name, on the other hand, belongs to a third party who will choose the name of its possessor. While the right to take a name belongs to the person who chooses their own name and surname, without third parties doing so.¹⁰ For all the above reasons, it is incontrovertible that the civil name has been present in people's lives since the earliest societies, initially appearing with the intention of identifying people and things, evolving along with civilizations to take on the proportions of a personality right when it was given legal protection by the law.

The civil name as a personality right

Man is a natural person who, when he is born alive, acquires personality rights, durable for life and indissolubly linked to the human person (rights...). In this understanding, Tartuce⁹ defines rights of the personality as “a set of characteristics and attributes of the human person, considered as an object of protection by the legal system”.

According to Brandelli¹⁰, personality rights are linked to the human being himself, in other words, they are allusive to him and consist of a minimum necessary for the complete evolution of the subject. It should also be noted that, although there was already some kind of protection for personality rights in ancient times (such as in ancient Rome and Greece), they were only duly recognized by the law after major historical events (such as the Second World War) that revealed their relevance, their link to the dignity of the human person and justified their legal protection.³ That's right. Since human dignity is the highest current value in the legal system, the 2002 Civil Code adopted the Personality Theory, according to which the name is conceived as a personality right innate to the human being and inherent to the condition of being a human being.¹²

This *Codex* deals with the name in Chapter II, which deals with personality rights. Article 16 expressly enshrines the right to a name

as a personality right conferred on all persons, namely that “everyone has the right to a name, including the first name and last name”.¹³ Articles 17 and 18 aim to protect a person's name from improper and undue use, such as in vexatious situations or those that expose them to ridicule, as well as prohibiting the unauthorized use of another person's name in commercial advertising.¹⁴ Still in the infra-constitutional sphere, the Public Records Law,¹⁵ later amended by Law No. 14.382/22¹⁴, provides detailed rules on civil names, regulating registration matters and the possibility of changing them.

In constitutional terms, although the Federal Constitution of 1988 does not expressly provide for the civil name of natural persons,¹⁶ it is possible to infer that the right to a name is implicitly provided for in the Magna Carta, given that the principle of human dignity is the main support for this right, which is one of the main foundations of the republic, under the terms of art. 1, item III, of the Major Law.¹⁵

From this perspective, personality rights and the dignity of the human person have their intertwined concept, it is not possible to separate them into different compartments, since their origins are mixed.¹⁶ Returning to the protection of the civil name, it can be seen that the name is internationally protected in some covenants and conventions to which Brazil is a signatory, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, incorporated by Brazil through Decree 592/92; the Pact of San José da Costa Rica (American Convention on Human Rights), incorporated by Brazil through Decree 678/92; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, incorporated by Brazil through Decree 99710/90; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, incorporated by Brazil through Decree 4377/02.¹⁶ The aforementioned treaties recognize the name as a right of the personality and a fundamental element for the full exercise and enjoyment of the principle of the dignity of the human person.

For Pontes De Miranda¹⁷, “with the theory of personality rights, a new morning of law began for the world”. This is because such prerogatives encompass countless predilections of the human being, such as life, honor, identity, and name, among others, intrinsically linked to the principle of human dignity. Following this line, Diniz¹⁸ argues that “the name integrates the personality because it is the external sign by which the person is designated, individualized and recognized within the family and society”. In view of this, since the name is one of the personality rights, it has some characteristics linked to the human person, such as being unavailable, inalienable, non-proprietary, absolute, obligatory, imprescriptible, non-transferable, unseizable, and exclusive, limited, among others. In fact, the characteristics mentioned above converge on the idea that the right to a name has a very personal status and its exercise is essential for the dignity of the human person as a whole, otherwise it would be inhuman, unworthy and unfaithful to human self-perception. Given the identifying nature of the name, its nature as a personality right is superimposed on this, according to which the subject must like their name and feel comfortable with it happy with its use. With this in mind, it took a long time for name changeability to become a reality in Brazilian legislation. Thus, only with Law No. 14.382/22,¹⁴ did it become possible to change one's name without the judicial bureaucracy previously imposed, as will be seen in later chapters.

In view of all the above, it must be recognized that the right to a name is one of the ways in which the dignity of the human person is realized and is part of one of the personality rights. Therefore, a certain person's discontent and embarrassment with their name would violate these legal maxims.

The immutability the name before law no. 14.382/2022

Some time ago, the immutability of the name was taken as a rule, establishing that the name, defined through birth or adoption, was definitive and could only be changed in specific and restricted cases, given that it was the state's way of identifying people and its alteration could cause confusion and doubts about its bearer. For this principle, inherited from the Iberian legal tradition,¹⁹ the name is a personal characteristic of definitive condition and must remain unalterable regardless of external or internal changes to its bearer.⁶ For this reason, the original wording of the Public Records Law provided in its article 58 that the name was immutable, except for some exceptional cases of change that had to be evaluated by the Judiciary.

According to Kumpel²⁰, "according to the principle of the immutability of the name, once registered, the name could not be changed without judicial review, unless expressly determined by law". It was clear that priority was given to legal certainty and the stability civil acts, with the right to a name and the self-perception of its bearer taking second place, so that this right became merely rhetorical.²⁰

Before Law 14.382/2022, due to controlled mutability, the name could only be changed in specific situations, such as: the bearer's ridiculous name, homonymy; the addition of a notorious public surname; the protection of victims or witnesses included in the protection program, adoption, material/spelling errors, translation of a foreign name, alteration due to use, discovery of the true name, transgender people, gender identity, among others accepted by the courts.

Gagliano Filho²¹ taught that:

The idea that should govern the legal discipline of the name is that it is an indelible mark of the individual, as an attribute of their personality, so its alterations can only be justified for really relevant reasons. Thus, it is not any personal whim that authorizes the modification of such an important sign of the human being.²¹

In order to change your name, you had to hire a lawyer to file a lawsuit with the Judiciary, which could be decided quickly or not (depending on the volume of cases before the court) and could be upheld or not, depending on the magistrate's opinion.

According to Schreiber¹⁹, this rule "generated numerous and unnecessary lawsuits in which the author himself in the inglorious role of demonstrating that his dissatisfaction with his name stemmed from some shameful situation, and not from a 'mere whim'."¹⁹ The rigid approach adopted by the old legislation in relation to changing one's name can be seen, and there were sustainable reasons for this at the time. However, this context of controlled immutability/mutability ceased to exist as the right to a name was increasingly recognized as a right inherent to personality and linked to the dignity of the human person.

According to Kumpel²⁰, "since it is a personality right, it would seem unreasonable to require the subject to present strong legal reasons for changing his or her name.

In the same, Schreiber²² states that:

As we can see, the protection of human dignity requires an urgent reversal in the approach to name change requests: it is not their acceptance, but their rejection, which depends on "sufficient grounds". Only then will he right to a name can assume its true vocation as a personality right, bringing into the sphere of personal self-determination not just the question of

the use of a name, but also its definition, as the primary symbol of a person's identification. It is from this perspective that the right to a name should be examined.²²

It turns out that the hypotheses primarily alluded to in legislation and case law did not even remotely meet the desires of those who, in one way or another, were unhappy with their own name, either because the hypotheses did not cover the situation experienced by the subject, or because they were subject to a judicial process, with costs and the need to hire a lawyer to do so. This perception of the right to one's name as one of the personality rights and the entry into force of Law 14.382/2022 have led to a new reality, which provides for the possibility of changing one's name without any reason or proof, directly at the extrajudicial office, upon payment of costs, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Brief analysis of law no. 14.382/2022

As seen in the previous chapters, the name was used to distinguish things and people from each other, so changing it was extremely restrictive and required the approval of the Judiciary. However, with the evolution of society and the Brazilian legal system, which has come to recognize the right to one's name as a right of personality and as a designating and self-determining factor of the person, this context has given way to changing one's name immotivately and directly in an extrajudicial office, as provided for in Law 14.382/22, reinforcing the legal protection of the name in the face of the principle of the dignity of the human person.

That's right. Law No. 14.382/2022 originates from Provisional Measure No. 1.085/2021, which was sent to the National Congress in December of that year and approved by the Senate in May 2022, dealing with the Electronic System of Public Records (SERP) and the modification of the name of a natural person,⁴ thus amending various provisions of Law No. 6.015/73 (the Public Records Law), including those dealing with civil names, removing the rule of mitigated name changeability once and for all. In this vein, with the innovation brought in by Law 14.382/22, the head of article 55 of the Law,¹⁵ following the provisions of article 16 of the Civil Code and electing the civil name (composed of the prename and surname) as a branch of the right to personality, intrinsic to the human person.

For Schreiber apud Tartuce¹⁹:

At the same time, it has been recognized that the human person has the right to have associated with his or her name that which concerns him or her, likewise, not to have linked to him or her facts or things that have nothing to do with him or her. It is a question of looking at the right to a name from a new, broader and more substantial perspective, which can be called the right to personal identity, encompassing not only the name but also the different traits by which the human person is represented in society.

With regard to changing one's name, which is the subject of this article, article 56 of the Public Records Law was amended, as its previous wording was as follows: "the interested party, within the first year after reaching the age of civil majority, may, personally or through a sufficient attorney, change their name, as long as it does not harm their family surnames, the change being recorded and published in the press".

Now, the aforementioned provision has received a new wording in its heading, and new paragraphs have been added, dealing with the extrajudicial commutation of a person's name at will after they reach the age of majority, and the procedure for doing so:

Art. 56: After reaching the age of civil majority, the registered person may personally and unmotivatedly request a change to their name, regardless of a court decision, and the change will be recorded and published electronically.

§ Paragraph 1: The unmotivated change of name may only be made in extrajudicial proceedings one (1) time, and its deconstruction will depend on a court ruling.

§ Paragraph 2: The registration of a change of name must include the previous name, the identity document number, the registration number in the Individual Taxpayer Registry (CPF) of the Special Secretariat of the Federal Revenue Service of Brazil, the passport number and the voter registration number of the registered person, which must be expressly included in all the certificates requested.

§ Paragraph 3: Once the procedure for changing the seat has been completed, the civil registry office of natural persons in which the change was made will, at the applicant's expense, officially communicate the act to the bodies that issue the identity document, CPF and passport, as well as to the Superior Electoral Court, preferably by electronic means.

§ Paragraph 4: If the civil registry officer suspects fraud, falsehood, bad faith, willfulness or simulation as to the real intention of the person requesting the rectification, he or she shall refuse the rectification on reasonable grounds.¹⁴

As can be seen from the new wording of art. 56 of Law no. 6.015/73, it has become it is possible to change one's name directly at the Natural Persons Civil Registry Office, without the need for motivation and independent of a court decision, with no statute of limitations as of the age of majority, as was previously the case. To do this, it is enough for the person, who is of legal age and capable, to go to an extrajudicial office in person, with their personal documents, ID, CPF and up-to-date birth certificate, with an application accompanied by the necessary documents and to pay the fees due, which are charged in accordance with each state's table of fees, in order for the procedure to be carried out. To this end, the application must be submitted in the presence of the officer, as stipulated in art. 515-E of CNJ Provision no. 149/2023, "The application for a change of name will be signed by the applicant in the **presence of the civil registry officer of natural persons**, indicating the change sought", since it cannot be made by a proxy. In addition, it is essential to be 18 years old in order to apply, as this is the age at which one reaches majority and becomes capable of personally exercising the acts of civil life, presupposing the existence of maturity and responsibility for the acts carried out.

In the words of Cantarino²³, "changing one's name functions as a potestative right dormant in time, which begins when the individual turns 18 and continues throughout their life". The progress made in allowing people to change their name unmotivatedly at the registry office re-signifies the "(...) importance occupied by the name in the intimate forum of each human being (...)",⁶ given that "(...) today there is no longer any external analysis of the problem, but only the intention of the holder to change their name is relevant, and any justification is unnecessary.⁶ Next, the first paragraph of article 56 imposes a limitation on the freedom provided for in the caput, prescribing that the unmotivated change of name at the registry office may occur only once, so that a new change or the annulment of the rectification will depend on an application to the Judiciary and a court ruling. This determination, in addition to guaranteeing "permanence, economy and security",⁶ prevents the extrajudicial act from becoming

vulnerable through various changes and circumvents the fraudulent intent that someone may have when changing their name.

The second paragraph goes on to state that, for safety reasons, after changing one's name, all certificates must include the previous name, as well as the numbers of identification documents (such as ID, CPF, passport and voter registration), in order to guarantee the principle of continuity and easy identification of the person, in line with Cassettari²⁴. It is important to note that the rule of recording the name and data on the brief report certificate only applies to cases of name change based on article 56 of Law 6015/73, and does not apply to transgender people, whose procedure is covered by articles 516 to 523 of CNJ Provision No. 149/2023, since in the latter case it is a confidential record and should avoid embarrassment and discrimination. After the procedure has been carried out, according to third paragraph of article 56 of the Public Records Law, in order to ensure publicity for the change of name, the registrar of the office where the change was made will, **at the applicant's expense**, inform (preferably by electronic means) the bodies responsible for issuing identification documents (ID, CPF and passport) and the Superior Electoral Court of the change made, in order to avoid risks and registration conflicts.

However, article 515-G of CNJ Provision No. 149/2023 provides as follows: "Once the procedure for changing the name has been completed, the registrar who carried out the change will communicate the act electronically, through the Natural Persons Civil Registry Information Center - CRC, **at no cost**, to the bodies that issue the RG, CPF, voter registration card and passport." However, if the communication is made by another means of transmission, as long as it is official, it will be at the applicant's expense. It is important to note that "if the party is a party to legal proceedings, the courts also receive the information so that they can update the name in the proceedings",²⁵ because the existence of ongoing legal proceedings does not prevent the procedure from being carried out, but the change must be communicated.

According to Professor Schreiber,²⁶ although there are those who criticize the legal certainty conveyed by the unmotivated and extrajudicial change of name, Law No. 14.382/22 provides the aforementioned mechanisms to prevent any fraud, leaving the individual's previous name easily accessible. In addition, nowadays there are other mechanisms to remove legal uncertainty, such as the CPF, biometric identification, among other methods. Therefore, with all the procedures brought in by Law 14.382/2022, it is incontrovertible that changing one's name directly at the extrajudicial office and without the need for motivation does not undermine legal certainty. Far from it, it embodies fundamental rights, thus beginning the phase of "extrajudicial mutability".²⁶ Even so, if there are doubts about the risks of changing the name or if the official suspects fraud, falsehood, bad faith, a defect of will (error, intent or coercion) or simulation as to the applicant's real intention, the registrar must, in a reasoned manner, refuse the change, in accordance with article 515-H of CNJ Provision No. 149/2023:

Art. 515-H. Suspecting fraud, falsehood, bad faith, defect of will or simulation as to the real intention of the applicant, the civil registry officer shall refuse the alteration on reasonable grounds and, if the applicant does not comply, may, on request, refer the application to the competent judge for a decision.

The wording of the fourth paragraph shows that the logic of the name change has been reversed. In other words, "it is the rejection

of requests for changes that must be substantiated with a specific indication of the threat that the change poses to the community. Bad faith is no longer presumed for those requesting a change of name, as was the case before Law 14.382/2022¹⁹. The law under study not only displaces a huge number of cases from the Judiciary, but also provides faster and more effective protection of the autonomy of the person who wishes to change their name, so that, without the participation of third parties, the will, feelings and self-perception of the citizen are the only elements to be taken into account when making the request. As we have seen, law 14.382/2022 pays special attention to the issue of changing one's name, because it is an identifying element of the human person, which should have all the support and legal protection, thus promoting the de-judicialization of the procedure that until recently was only possible judicially, which reinforces, however, the relevant role of extrajudicial offices as an important gateway to justice.²⁷

It's no wonder that between June and December 2022 alone, 4,970 (four thousand, nine hundred and seventy people) changed their name extrajudicially, of which in the state of São Paulo 1.389 people changed their name; in the state of Minas Gerais there were 652 people; in Paraná there were 478 people; in Bahia, 336; in Ceará 267; in Maranhão 230 people; in Pernambuco 227; in Santa Catarina 220; in the state of Goiás there were 198 changes; in the Federal District there were 184; in Paraíba 114; in Pará there were 101 changes; Espírito Santo there were 84 changes; in Rio Grande do Norte 79 people changed their names; Mato Grosso with 78 changes; Sergipe with 59; Mato Grosso do Sul with 48 changes; Amazonas with 44; Alagoas with 39; Tocantins with 38; the state of Piauí had 31 changes; Rondônia with 24; Rio Grande do Sul with 20; Acre with 11; Rio de Janeiro with 9; Amapá with 7 changes, and Roraima with 3 changes to its name.²⁵ Furthermore, in a more recent survey carried out by the National Association of Natural Persons Registrars (ARPEN - BR), since the publication of Law No. 14.382/22, 19,384 Brazilians adopted a new name through an extrajudicial office.²⁸ This data only corroborates the assertiveness of Law No. 14,382/2022, in which "the name is no longer treated from the exclusive perspective of legal certainty, and is no longer seen as a matter of State or an imposition of destiny, but as a genuine space for the realization of the existential autonomy of the human person (...)"¹⁹

According to Luis Edson Faquin⁵:

By being individualized by a name, the person must feel comfortable with it, and the nomenclature must reflect the way the person feels about themselves and how they are recognized by the community. The fundamental right to a name, therefore, must take into account not only the existence of a name in itself, but its social function in creating a human being's identity.

Lastly, it is feasible to maintain that there has been a complete adjustment of the name institute to the dynamics of social reality, since the name is no longer treated from the restricted point of view of legal certainty, and is no longer regarded primarily as a matter of State, but as a reliable space for the realization of the self-perception of the human person, abandoning its immutable character.²⁹⁻³²

Final considerations

This article sought to analyze the evolution of the name from ancient societies to the first ones used the name to distinguish things and people from each other. With social progress, the name came to be seen as a right of the person, inherent to their personality. However, before Law 14.382/2022, the name was considered immutable, so that it could be changed in a few exceptions and by filing a lawsuit, which

drowned the Judiciary in demands and was not at all quick or cheap for the applicant. This scenario changed with Law 14.382/22, which authorized the change of name at the registry office, upon payment of a fee and a personal request from the person over 18, without the need to present a justification.

As a result, the perspective given to the right to one's name changed, from being a mere identifier of the person and the state a subjective and autonomous bias on the part of the person, who, based on self-perception, could change their name to one they felt more comfortable and happy with. It is worth noting that the change brought about by Law 14.382/2022 has not made the procedure for changing one's name any more fragile or insecure, since article 56, in its paragraphs, provides mechanisms to prevent the person who initiates the name change from doing so in bad faith. Having said that, it can be seen that the protection of the right to change one's name is much more to a subjective right inherent to the human person, with the new way of changing it, directly at the extrajudicial office and without bureaucracy, thus contributing to the Judiciary and to people's autonomy, as well as guaranteeing fundamental rights.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

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