against him, them or it which is so served shall be of the same legal force and validity (except as hereinafter provided) as if served on him, them or it personally. Service of such persons shall be made by leaving a copy of the process with a fee of \$2.00 in the hands of the Secretary of State or in his office, and such service shall be sufficient service upon the said nonresident individual, firm or corporation, and of full force and effect in any court of this State; provided that notice of such service and a copy of the declaration or titling shall forthwith be sent by registered mail by the plaintiff or his attorney to the defendant and the defendant's return receipt, and the plaintiff's or his attorney's affidavit of compliance herewith shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court in which the said proceedings are pending; and when a declaration in any such action shall have been filed in Court and service of process made upon the Secretary of State, and notice thereof and a copy of said declaration sent to the defendant, and the defendant's return receipt, together with the affidavit of compliance, filed with the Clerk of the Court as hereinabove provided, the defendant shall plead to said declaration within sixty days from the date of delivery of said notice of service and copy of the declaration, noted upon said return receipt; and if the defendant shall fail to so plead, judgment by default shall be entered against him by the Court or Clerk thereof, upon motion in writing made by the plaintiff or his attorney, at any time thereafter, before the defendant shall have pleaded, unless the Court. for good reasons, shall have granted said defendant further time to plead; and upon such entry of judgment, the plaintiff may forthwith sue out his writ of inquiry, or otherwise enter up final judgment, according to the course of the court. court in which the action is pending may order such continuances as may be necessary to afford the defendant a reasonable opportunity to defend the action. The fee of \$2.00 paid by the plaintiff to the Secretary of State at the time of service shall be taxed in the costs of the proceedings and the Secretary of State shall keep a record of all such processes which shall show the day and hour of service, and he shall account for all funds so coming into his hands from such services, to the proper officer or department of this State.