UNIFORM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE ACT FOR VESSELS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMISSIONERS ON UNIFORM STATE LAWS

For Drafting Committee Telephonic Meeting on June 17, 2009

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June 10, 2009
DRAFTING COMMITTEE
FOR UNIFORM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE ACT FOR VESSELS

The Committee appointed by and representing the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws in preparing this Uniform Certificate of Title Act for Vessels consists of the following individuals:

MILLER, JR., ESSON McKENZIE, Division of Legislative Services, 910 Capitol St., 2nd Floor, Richmond, VA 23219, Chair
BAENA, SCOTT L., Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP, 200 S. Biscayne Blvd., Suite 2500, Miami, FL 33131-5340
CARDI, VINCENT P., West Virginia University College of Law, P.O. Box 6130, Morgantown, WV 26506-6130
CHAiken, PAUL W., Rudman & Winchell, P.O. Box 1401, 84 Harlow St., Bangor, ME 04402-1401
FERRIELL, JEFFREY T., Capital University Law School, 303 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215-3200
FERRY, MICHAEL A., Gateway Legal Services, 200 N. Broadway, Suite 950, St. Louis, MO 63102
OSSEN, NEAL, Ossen & Murphy, 55 Oak St., Hartford, CT 06106
SATTERWHITE, RODNEY W., Stubbeman, McRae, Sealy, Laughlin & Browder Inc., P.O. Box 1540, Midland, TX 79702
THARPES, YVONNE L., Legislature of the Virgin Islands, P.O. Box 1690, St. Thomas, VI 00804
STEPHEN L. SEPINUCK, Gonzaga University School of Law, P.O. Box 3528, Spokane, WA 99220, Reporter

EX OFFICIO
WALTERS, MARTHA LEE, Oregon Supreme Court, 1163 State Street, Salem, OR 97301-2563, President
HENNING, WILLIAM H., University of Alabama School of Law, Box 870382, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0382, Division Chair

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION ADVISOR
WILLIAMS, DAVID McI., Gorman & Williams, 36 S. Charles St., Ste. 900, Baltimore, MD 21201-3114, American Bar Association Advisor

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SEBERT, JOHN A., Uniform Law Commission, 111 N. Wabash, Suite 1010, Chicago, IL 60602, Executive Director
UNIFORM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE ACT
FOR VESSELS

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This [act] may be cited as the Uniform Certificate of Title Act for Vessels.

SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS.

(a) In this [act]:

(w) “Principally used” means used or to be used most during a calendar year.

(x) “Used” in the phrase “principally used” means to operate, navigate, or employ.

(y) “Waters of this state” means any waters within the territorial limits of this state.

Reporter’s Note

These three definitions will be used to delineate the scope of this Act. In particular, they will be used to identify which state’s titling law applies to a particular vessel. Paragraph (w) is derived from 33 C.F.R. § 173.11(h). Paragraph (x) is derived from 33 C.F.R. § 173.11(i). These definitions were selected to harmonize this Act with applicable federal regulations. Paragraph (y) is derived from Cal. Vehicle Code § 9840(e), Ky. Rev. Stat. § 235.010(6), Okla, Stat. § 4002(33), S.C. Code § 50-21-10(28), Tex. Parks & Wild. Code § 31.003(5), and Utah Code §§ 41-1a-102(69), 73-18-2(16). It seems sufficient unless the Committee concludes more specific language is needed to cover coastal waters or boundary waters. Cf. Idaho Code § 67-7003(23) (“‘Waters of this state’ means any waters in the state of Idaho over which the state has jurisdiction”); Md. Code § 8-701(t) (“‘Waters of the State’ means any water within the jurisdiction of the State, the marginal sea adjacent to the State, and the high seas when navigated as part of a ride or journey to or from the shore of the State”); Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 90B, § 1 (“‘Waters of the commonwealth’, – all coastal and inland waters . . .”); Minn. Stat. § 86B.820(15) (“‘Waters of this state’ means waters capable of substantial public use and waters to which the public has access, that are within the territorial limits of this state, including boundary waters”); Or. Rev. Stat. §§ 830.005(13) (“‘Waters of this state’ means all waters within the territorial limits of this state, the marginal sea adjacent to this state and the high seas when navigated as part of a journey or ride to or from the shore of this state”); Pa. Con. Stat. tit. 30, § 102 (“‘Waters of this Commonwealth’ includes all inland, tidal and boundary waters, whether navigable or nonnavigable, under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. The term includes ice that forms on these waters”); S.D. Cod. Laws §§ 32-3A-2(12) (“‘Waters of this state,’ any public waters within the territorial limits of this state and all waters which form a common boundary between this state and Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Iowa, or Nebraska”); Wis. Stat. § 30.50(14) (“‘Waters of this state’ means any waters within the territorial limits of this state, including the Wisconsin portion of boundary waters”).
SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS.

(a) In this [act]:

(z) “Vessel” includes any watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water, except the following:

(1) A seaplane [on the water] [or other vehicle capable of sustained flight].
(2) An amphibious vehicle for which a certificate of title is issued pursuant to [state motor vehicle certificate of title act] [or similar statute of another state].
(3) Watercraft less than [xx] feet in length.
(4) Watercraft powered solely by [sail, paddle[, or oars].
(5) Watercraft less than [xx] feet in length and powered solely by [sail, paddle[, or oars].
(6) Inflatable watercraft.
(7) A surfboard.
(8) Watercraft designed to operate only on a permanently fixed course and the movement of which is restricted to or guided on by means of a mechanical device to which the watercraft is attached or by which the watercraft is controlled, or by means of a mechanical device attached to the watercraft itself.
(9) A floating structure which is designed and built to be used as a stationary waterborne residential dwelling, which (A) does not have and is not designed to have a mode of power of its own, (B) is dependent for utilities upon a continuous utility linkage to a source originating on shore, and (C) has a permanent, continuous hookup to a shoreside sewage system.
(10) Watercraft whose owner is a State or subdivision thereof, which is used principally for governmental purposes, and which is clearly identifiable as such.
(11) Watercraft used solely as a lifeboat on another watercraft.

Reporter’s Note

Subparagraph (1) is derived from most state vessel titling statutes. The first bracketed language frequently appears in those statutes but its purpose is unclear. The second bracketed language is
offered as a way to distinguish a seaplane that can no longer fly and which is really used for surface transportation.

Subparagraph (2) is derived from D.C. Mun. Laws, tit. 19, § 1099. Its purpose here is to exclude from the scope of this Act vessels that qualify as motor vehicles for the purposes of a state’s motor vehicle titling law.

Subparagraphs (3), (4) and (5) are derived from numerous state statutes that limit the type of watercraft for which a certificate of title is required. Several states do not title watercraft less than a designated length, ranging from 8-26 feet. Several do not title non-motor-powered watercraft. And some do not title non-motor-powered watercraft of less than a designated length. These paragraphs are bracketed because, if the Committee chooses to include these exceptions, not all of the exceptions would be needed. In particular, subparagraph (5) is a more narrow alternative to paragraphs (3) or (4).

Several of the existing state statutes that exclude watercraft of the type mentioned in subparagraphs (3), (4), or (5) do so by listing the type of excluded watercraft (e.g., “canoe” or “kayak”). See Idaho Code § 67-7040; Iowa Code § 462A.77(1); Minn. Stat. § 86B.825. Because those terms are undefined, the approach taken here is to identify the excluded watercraft not by undefined type, but by method of propulsion. The term “sail” is bracketed because more states currently exclude human-powered watercraft than exclude sail-powered watercraft.

Subparagraph (6) is derived from Iowa Code § 462A.77(1) and S.D. Cod. Laws §§ 32-3A-2(5).

Subparagraph (7) is derived from S.C. Code § 50-23-30.

Subparagraphs (8) and (9) are derived from Cal. Vehicle Code § 9873. Subparagraph (8) is apparently designed to exclude watercraft used in fixed rides at theme parks. Subparagraph (9) is designed to exclude floating residences that at fixed to the shore. Subparagraph (9) is arguably not necessary, since the residence would not seem to satisfy the flush part of the definition. While the residence floats, it does not appear to be “used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.”

Subparagraph (10) is derived from 33 C.F.R. § 173.11(c). The purposes of a certificate of title act would not seem applicable to government-owned and operated vessels that are readily identifiable as such.

Subparagraph (11) is derived from 33 C.F.R. § 173.11(d).