

CHAPTER 123—NUMBERING UNDOCUMENTED VESSELS

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CHAPTER REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This chapter is referred to in sections 2101, 2102, 12501, 13102, 13103, 30101 of this title; section 1903 of Appendix to this title; title 16 sections 1802, 2432, 5502; title 19 section 1704; title 33 section 2602.

§ 12301. Numbering vessels

(a) An undocumented vessel equipped with propulsion machinery of any kind shall have a number issued by the proper issuing authority in the State in which the vessel principally is operated.

(b) The Secretary shall require an undocumented barge more than 100 gross tons operating on the navigable waters of the United States to be numbered.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 590; Pub. L. 102-587, title V, § 5305, Nov. 4, 1992, 106 Stat. 5083.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12301 | 46:1466 |

Section 12301 requires that undocumented vessels that are propelled by machinery be issued an identification number by the proper issuing authority in the State in which the vessel is primarily operated.

AMENDMENTS

1992—Pub. L. 102-587 designated existing provisions as subsec. (a) and added subsec. (b).

§ 12302. Standard numbering system

(a) The Secretary shall prescribe by regulation a standard numbering system for vessels to which this chapter applies. On application by a State, the Secretary shall approve a State numbering system that is consistent with the standard numbering system. In carrying out its numbering system, a State shall adopt any definitions of relevant terms prescribed by regulations of the Secretary.

(b) A State with an approved numbering system is the issuing authority within the meaning of this chapter. The Secretary is the issuing authority in a State in which a State numbering system has not been approved.

(c) When a vessel is numbered in a State, it is deemed in compliance with the numbering system of a State in which it temporarily is operated.

(d) When a vessel is removed to a new State of principal operation, the issuing authority of that State shall recognize the validity of the number issued by the original State for 60 days.

(e) If a State has a numbering system approved after the Secretary issues a number, the

State shall recognize the validity of the number issued by the Secretary for one year.

(f) When the Secretary decides that a State numbering system is not being carried out consistent with the standard numbering system or the State has changed the system without the Secretary's approval, the Secretary may withdraw approval after giving notice to the State, in writing, stating the reasons for the withdrawal.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 590.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12302 | 46:1467 |

Section 12302 provides for a standard numbering system for undocumented vessels and for approval of State numbering systems by the Secretary. It also requires that a State, when implementing its numbering system, adopt any relevant terms required by the Secretary. In States without approved numbering systems, the Federal Government issues the numbers. This section also provides for the operation of a vessel in a State other than the one in which it was numbered.

§ 12303. Exemption from numbering requirements

(a) When the Secretary is the authority issuing a number under this chapter, the Secretary may exempt a vessel or class of vessels from the numbering requirements of this chapter under conditions the Secretary may prescribe.

(b) When a State is the issuing authority, it may exempt from the numbering requirements of this chapter a vessel or class of vessels exempted under subsection (a) of this section or otherwise as permitted by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 591.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12303 | 46:1468 |

Section 12303 permits the Secretary and any State, when it is the issuing authority, to exempt vessels from the numbering requirements.

§ 12304. Certificates of numbers

(a) A certificate of number is granted for a number issued under this chapter. The certificate shall be pocket-sized, shall be at all times available for inspection on the vessel for which issued when the vessel is in operation, and may be valid for not more than 3 years. The certificate of number for a vessel less than 26 feet in length and leased or rented to another for the latter's noncommercial operation of less than 7 days may be retained on shore by the vessel's owner or representative at the place from which the vessel departs or returns to the possession of the owner or the owner's representative. A vessel that does not have the certificate of number on board shall be identified when in operation, and comply with requirements, as the issuing authority prescribes.

(b) The owner of a vessel numbered under this chapter shall provide—

(1) the issuing authority notice of the transfer of any part of the owner's interest in the

vessel or of the destruction or abandonment of the vessel, within a reasonable time after the transfer, destruction, or abandonment; and

(2) notice of a change of address within a reasonable time of the change, as prescribed by regulation.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 591.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12304 | 46:1469 |

Section 12304 describes a certificate of number and stipulates when it must be carried on board a vessel. It also requires that the number issuing authority be notified when a boat is sold, transferred, destroyed, or abandoned, or when the owner's address changes.

§ 12305. Displaying numbers

A number required by this chapter shall be painted on, or attached to, each side of the forward half of the vessel for which it was issued, and shall be the size, color, and type as may be prescribed by the Secretary. No other number may be carried on the forward half of the vessel.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 591.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12305 | 46:1470 |

Section 12305 describes the manner in which a number must be displayed on a vessel, and prohibits the display of other numbers on the forward half of the vessel.

§ 12306. Safety certificates

When a State is the authority issuing a number under this chapter, it may require that the individual in charge of a numbered vessel have a valid safety certificate issued under conditions set by the issuing authority, except when the vessel is subject to manning requirements under part F of this subtitle.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 591.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12306 | 46:1471 |

Section 12306 authorizes a State that is an issuing authority to require a numbered vessel operator to hold a valid safety certificate, unless the vessel is subject to manning requirements under part F of this subtitle.

§ 12307. Regulations on numbering and fees

The authority issuing a number under this chapter may prescribe regulations and establish fees to carry out the intent of this chapter. The fees shall apply equally to residents and non-residents of the State. A State issuing authority may impose only conditions for vessel numbering that are—

- (1) prescribed by this chapter or regulations of the Secretary about the standard numbering system; or
- (2) related to proof of payment of State or local taxes.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 591.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12307 | 46:1472 |

Section 12307 provides the States or the Secretary with the authority to prescribe regulations and establish fees for carrying out the requirements of this chapter. The fee must apply equally to residents and non-residents of the State in which the vessel is numbered.

§ 12308. Providing vessel numbering and registration information

A person may request from an authority issuing a number under this chapter the numbering and registration information of a vessel that is retrievable from vessel numbering system records of the issuing authority. When the issuing authority is satisfied that the request is reasonable and related to a boating safety purpose, the information shall be provided on paying the cost of retrieving and providing the information requested.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 592.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12308 | 46:1473 |

Section 12308 requires the number issuing authority to supply for a fee, numbering and registration information to any person, upon request, if the request is reasonable and related to boating safety.

§ 12309. Penalties

(a) A person willfully violating this chapter or a regulation prescribed under this chapter shall be fined not more than \$5,000, imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

(b) A person violating this chapter or a regulation prescribed under this chapter is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of not more than \$1,000. If the violation involves the operation of a vessel, the vessel also is liable in rem for the penalty.

(c) When a civil penalty of not more than \$200 has been assessed under this chapter, the Secretary may refer the matter of collection of the penalty directly to the United States magistrate of the jurisdiction in which the person liable may be found for collection procedures under supervision of the district court and under an order issued by the court delegating this authority under section 636(b) of title 28.

(Pub. L. 98-89, Aug. 26, 1983, 97 Stat. 592.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

| <i>Revised section</i> | <i>Source section (U.S. Code)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12309(a) | 46:1483 |
| 12309(b) | 46:1484(b) |
| 12309(c) | 46:1484(d) |

Section 12309 provides for civil and criminal penalties for violation of the vessel numbering provisions in this title.

CHANGE OF NAME

Reference to United States magistrate or to magistrate deemed to refer to United States magistrate judge pursuant to section 321 of Pub. L. 101-650, set out as a note under section 631 of Title 28, Judiciary and Judicial Procedure.

**CHAPTER 125—VESSEL IDENTIFICATION
SYSTEM**

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|--------|---|
| Sec. | |
| 12501. | Establishment of a vessel identification system. |
| 12502. | Identification numbers, signal letters, and markings. |
| 12503. | Information available to the system. |
| 12504. | Information available from the system. |
| 12505. | Fees. |
| 12506. | Delegation of authority. |
| 12507. | Penalties. |

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Section 101 of H.R. 3105, as amended, adds a new chapter 125 to title 46, United States Code, to establish a vessel identification system for all vessels of the United States. This would include vessels documented under chapter 121 of title 46, numbered under chapter 123 of that title, or titled under the law of a State. This new chapter consists of new sections 12501–12507 as follows.

CHAPTER REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This chapter is referred to in sections 31321, 31322 of this title; title 33 sections 1321, 2602.

§ 12501. Establishment of a vessel identification system

(a) The Secretary of Transportation shall establish a vessel identification system to make available information under section 12503 of this title for use by the public for law enforcement and other purposes relating to—

- (1) the ownership of documented vessels;
- (2) the ownership of vessels numbered under chapter 123 of this title; and
- (3) the ownership of vessels titled under the law of a State.

(b) The vessel identification system shall include information prescribed by the Secretary including—

- (1) identifying a vessel;
- (2) identifying the owner of the vessel, including—

(A) the owner's social security number or, if that number is not available, other means of identification acceptable to the Secretary; or

(B) for an owner other than an individual—

- (i) the owner's taxpayer identification number; or

(ii) if the owner does not have a taxpayer identification number, the social security number of an individual who is a corporate officer, general partner, or individual trustee of the owner and who signed the application for documentation or numbering for the vessel;

(3) identifying the State in which it is titled or numbered;

(4) indicating whether the vessel is numbered or titled, or both;

(5) if titled in a State, indicating where evidence of a lien or other security interest may be found against the vessel in that State; and

(6) information assisting law enforcement officials.

(c) The Secretary may maintain information under this chapter in connection with any other information system maintained by the Secretary.

(Pub. L. 100–710, title I, §101(a), Nov. 23, 1988, 102 Stat. 4735; Pub. L. 101–225, title III, §302(1), Dec. 12, 1989, 103 Stat. 1922; Pub. L. 101–595, title VI, §603(10), Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 2993.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section 12501

Subsection (a) of section 12501 requires the Secretary of Transportation to establish a system of information concerning vessels of the United States for law enforcement and other purposes. The Secretary is required to make available information from the system relating to the ownership of vessels documented under chapter 121 of title 46, numbered under chapter 123 of that title, and titled under the law of a State. The information is available under section 12503 for use by the public, similarly under the Ship Mortgage Act, 1920.

Subsection (b) lists the vessel identification information which is required to be maintained by the Secretary. The Secretary has the authority to prescribe other information to be maintained in addition to the items listed. For example, the Secretary may identify vessels issued fisheries permits by the Department of Commerce. The Secretary may also monitor transactions involving vessels that require approval by the Secretary under section 9 of the Shipping Act, 1916 (46 App. U.S.C. 808) before interest or control in the vessel may be transferred to a noncitizen.

Subsection (c) clarifies that the Secretary has the flexibility to maintain this system in connection with any other information system maintained by the Secretary, including the Federal Aviation Administration system containing aircraft ownership information. This would also permit the Secretary to combine various systems and data bases maintained by the Secretary such as documentation and numbering of vessels, and safety, casualty, and law enforcement statistics.

AMENDMENTS

1990—Subsec. (b)(2)(A). Pub. L. 101–595 amended subpar. (A) generally. Prior to amendment, subpar. (A) read as follows: “the owner's social security number; or”.

1989—Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 101–225 amended par. (2) generally, adding subpars. (A) and (B).

EFFECTIVE DATE

Chapter effective Jan. 1, 1989, with certain exceptions and qualifications, see section 107 of Pub. L. 100–710, set out as a note under section 30101 of this title.

RECORDS AND OTHER INFORMATION; ESTABLISHMENT,
CENTRALIZATION AND COMPUTERIZATION

Section 104(e)(2) of title I of Pub. L. 100–710 provided that: “To establish, centralize, and computerize records and other information maintained under chapters 121, 125, and 313 of title 46, United States Code, from the effective date of this title [Jan. 1, 1989, with certain exceptions and qualifications, see section 107 of Pub. L. 100–710, set out as a note under section 30101 of this title] through September 30, 1993, the Secretary of Transportation shall spend (out of amounts appropriated for the Department of Transportation under an appropriations law) not less than an amount that is equal to the amounts estimated to be—

“(A) collected under section 9701 of title 31, United States Code, for fees paid for services and things of value provided under chapter 313 of title 46, United States Code (as enacted by section 101 of this Act), and for documenting vessels under chapter 121 of title 46; and

“(B) transferred to or collected by the Secretary under chapter 125 of title 46, United States Code (as enacted by section 101 of this Act).”

PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT; RECRUITMENT, COMPENSATION, TRAINING, PURCHASING, OR DEPLOYMENT

Section 104(g) of Pub. L. 100–710 provided that: “Nothing in this section [amending sections 2101, 2110, 12102,