

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES—CONTINUED

Revised section	Source section (U.S. Code)
31325(b)(1)	46:951 (2d sentence)
31325(b)(2)	46:954(a)
31325(b)(3)	New
31325(c)	46:951 (3d sentence)
31325(d)	46:951 (4th to 6th sentences)
31325(e)	46:952 (1st, 2d sentences)

Section 31325 provides for the enforcement of a preferred mortgage lien.

Section 31325(a) makes a “preferred mortgage” a lien on the vessel in the amount of the mortgage indebtedness secured by the vessel outstanding at foreclosure. This subsection makes no substantive change to law.

Section 31325(b) provides that, on default of any term, the mortgagee may enforce the preferred mortgage lien in a civil action *in rem*, or *in personam* in admiralty against the mortgagor, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness secured by the vessel or any deficiency in paying off that indebtedness. This subsection makes a substantive change to law by allowing a nonadmiralty civil action to be brought against the mortgagor, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness secured by the vessel or any deficiency in paying off that indebtedness. This change allows an action to be brought even when the vessel is outside U.S. jurisdiction. This section will also allow the action to be brought against the comaker or guarantor of the mortgage.

Section 31325(c) provides for original and exclusive jurisdiction by a district court, to the exclusion of the courts of a State for civil actions brought *in rem*. It also provides for original jurisdiction for civil actions brought *in personam* in admiralty and civil actions brought under subsection (b)(3). This subsection makes a substantive change to law by broadening the jurisdiction to courts in the territories, as defined in section 31301, as well as giving original jurisdiction to the district courts in nonadmiralty civil actions brought to enforce the preferred mortgage lien.

Subsection (d) provides that actual notice of a civil action *in rem* to enforce a maritime lien must be given in a manner directed by the court to the master, individual in charge of the vessel, to any person that recorded a notice of a claim of an undischarged lien, and, for the first time, to the mortgagee of a mortgage filed with the Secretary. This notice is not required if, after a search is made that is satisfactory to the court, the person entitled to notice is not found in the United States. Failure to give notice does not affect the court’s jurisdiction. However, the mortgagor is still liable to the person not notified for damages in the amount of that person’s interest in the vessel that was terminated by the civil action *in rem*, and a civil action may still be brought to recover the amount of the terminated interest. The district courts have original jurisdiction of the action, regardless of the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties. If plaintiff prevails, the court shall award costs and attorneys fees to the plaintiff.

Subsection (e) provides that, in a civil action *in rem*, the court may appoint a receiver and authorize operation of the vessel. When directed by the court, a United States marshal may take possession—even if the vessel is in the possession of or under the control of a person claiming a possessory common law lien. This subsection makes a substantive change to law by allowing the court to retain *in rem* jurisdiction over the vessel even if the receiver operates the vessel outside the district in which the court is located.

HOUSE FLOOR STATEMENT

Subsection (c) of this section clarifies that the district courts have original jurisdiction for a civil action under subsection (b) of this section, and exclusive jurisdiction in the case of vessels documented or to be documented under chapter 121 of title 46.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (b)(3)(B). Pub. L. 110–181 amended Pub. L. 109–304, §15(30). See 2006 Amendment note below.

2006—Subsec. (b)(3)(B). Pub. L. 109–304, §15(30), as amended by Pub. L. 110–181, substituted “section 56101 or 56102 of this title” for “section 9 or 37 of the Shipping Act, 1916 (46 App. U.S.C. 808, 835)”.

2002—Subsec. (d)(1)(B). Pub. L. 107–295, §205(b)(1), substituted “an unexpired notice of a claim” for “a notice of a claim”.

Subsec. (f)(1). Pub. L. 107–295, §205(b)(2), substituted “an unexpired notice of a claim” for “a notice of a claim”.

1998—Subsecs. (b)(1), (3), (c). Pub. L. 105–383 inserted “a vessel titled in a State,” after “chapter 121 of this title.”

1996—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 104–324, §1124(a)(1), substituted “mortgagee may” for “mortgage may” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 104–324, §1124(a)(2)(A), substituted “preferred” for “perferred”.

Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 104–324, §1124(a)(2)(B), (3), added par. (3).

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 104–324, §1124(b), added subsec. (f).

1989—Subsecs. (b), (c). Pub. L. 101–225 amended subsecs. (b) and (c) generally. Prior to amendment, subsecs. (b) and (c) read as follows:

“(b) On default of any term of the preferred mortgage, the mortgagee may enforce the preferred mortgage lien in—

“(1) a civil action *in rem* for a documented vessel or a vessel to be documented under chapter 121 of this title;

“(2) a civil action *in personam* in admiralty against the mortgagor, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness secured by the mortgaged vessel or any deficiency in full payment of that indebtedness; and

“(3) a civil action against the mortgagor, comaker, or guarantor for the amount of the outstanding indebtedness secured by the mortgaged vessel or any deficiency in full payment of that indebtedness.

“(c) The district courts have original jurisdiction of a civil action brought under subsection (b) of this section. However, for documented vessels or vessels to be documented under chapter 121 of this title, this jurisdiction is exclusive of the courts of the States for a civil action under subsection (b)(1) of this section.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2008 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 110–181 effective as if included in the enactment of Pub. L. 109–304, see section 3529(b)(2) of Pub. L. 110–181, set out as a note under section 3205 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2002 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 107–295, title II, §205(e), Nov. 25, 2002, 116 Stat. 2096, provided that: “This section [see Tables for classification] shall take effect January 1, 2003.”

CONSTRUCTION OF 1996 AMENDMENTS

Section 1124(c) of Pub. L. 104–324 provided that: “The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) [amending this section] may not be construed to imply that remedies other than judicial remedies were not available before the date of enactment of this section [Oct. 19, 1996] to enforce claims for outstanding indebtedness secured by mortgaged vessels.”

§ 31326. Court sales to enforce preferred mortgage liens and maritime liens and priority of claims

(a) When a vessel is sold by order of a district court in a civil action *in rem* brought to enforce a preferred mortgage lien or a maritime lien, any claim in the vessel existing on the date of sale is terminated, including a possessory com-

mon law lien of which a person is deprived under section 31325(e)(2) of this title, and the vessel is sold free of all those claims.

(b) Each of the claims terminated under subsection (a) of this section attaches, in the same amount and in accordance with their priorities to the proceeds of the sale, except that—

(1) the preferred mortgage lien, including a preferred mortgage lien on a foreign vessel whose mortgage has been guaranteed under chapter 537 of this title, has priority over all claims against the vessel (except for expenses and fees allowed by the court, costs imposed by the court, and preferred maritime liens); and

(2) for a foreign vessel whose mortgage has not been guaranteed under chapter 537 of this title, the preferred mortgage lien is subordinate to a maritime lien for necessities provided in the United States.

(Pub. L. 100-710, title I, §102(c), Nov. 23, 1988, 102 Stat. 4746; Pub. L. 103-160, div. A, title XIII, §1360, Nov. 30, 1993, 107 Stat. 1816; Pub. L. 109-304, §15(31), Oct. 6, 2006, 120 Stat. 1704.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section	Source section (U.S. Code)
31326(a)	46:953(b), 961(c)
31326(b)(1)	46:953(b)
31326(b)(2)	46:951 (2d par. proviso)

Section 31326(a) provides for a court-ordered sale to enforce a preferred mortgage lien or a maritime lien and the priority of claims. When a mortgaged vessel is sold by court order in a civil action *in rem*, any prior claim in the vessel is terminated—including any possessory common law lien. This subsection makes a substantive change to law by making the process the same for maritime liens as was provided for preferred mortgage liens. This eliminates the requirement for making a new mortgagee for a court sale to enforce a maritime lien. This section also broadens the jurisdiction to courts in the territories, as defined in section 31301.

Section 31326(b)(1) provides that each of these terminated claims attaches, in the same amount and priority, to the proceeds of sale—except that the preferred mortgage lien always has priority over these other claims. However, the preferred mortgage lien is still subordinated to expenses and fees allowed by the court, costs imposed by the court, and any preferred maritime liens. This may include statutory fees such as the fee of the United States Marshal under 28 U.S.C. 1921. Except for broadening its coverage under subsection (a), this makes no substantive change to law.

Section 31326(b)(2) provides in the case of a foreign vessel, the preferred mortgage lien is also subordinated to a maritime lien for necessities performed or supplied for the vessel in the United States. “Provided” has been substituted for “provided or supplied” for consistency in usage. Except for broadening its coverage under subsection (a), this paragraph makes no substantive change to law.

AMENDMENTS

2006—Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 109-304, §15(31)(A), substituted “chapter 537 of this title,” for “title XI of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1101 et seq.)”.

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 109-304, §15(31)(B), substituted “chapter 537 of this title” for “title XI of that Act”.

1993—Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 103-160, §1260(1), inserted “, including a preferred mortgage lien on a foreign vessel whose mortgage has been guaranteed under title XI of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936 (46 App. U.S.C. 1101 et seq.)” after “preferred mortgage lien”.

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 103-160, §1360(2), inserted “whose mortgage has not been guaranteed under title XI of that Act” after “foreign vessel”.

§ 31327. Forfeiture of mortgagee interest

The interest of a mortgagee in a documented vessel or a vessel covered by a preferred mortgage under section 31322(d) of this title may be terminated by a forfeiture of the vessel for a violation of a law of the United States only if the mortgagee authorized, consented, or conspired to do the act, failure, or omission that is the basis of the violation.

(Pub. L. 100-710, title I, §102(c), Nov. 23, 1988, 102 Stat. 4746.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section	Source section (U.S. Code)
31327	46:961(b)

Section 31327 provides for forfeiture of the mortgagee’s interest if the mortgagee authorized, consented, or conspired to do the act, failure, or omission that is the basis of the violation that caused forfeiture of the vessel. This section makes no substantive change to law.

[§ 31328. Repealed. Pub. L. 104-324, title XI, § 1113(b)(1), Oct. 19, 1996, 110 Stat. 3970]

Section, Pub. L. 100-710, title I, §102(c), Nov. 23, 1988, 102 Stat. 4746, related to limitations on parties serving as trustees of mortgaged vessel interests.

§ 31329. Court sales of documented vessels

(a) A documented vessel may be sold by order of a district court only to—

- (1) a person eligible to own a documented vessel under section 12103 of this title; or
- (2) a mortgagee of that vessel.

(b) When a vessel is sold to a mortgagee not eligible to own a documented vessel—

- (1) the vessel must be held by the mortgagee for resale;
- (2) the vessel held by the mortgagee is subject to chapter 563 of this title; and
- (3) the sale of the vessel to the mortgagee is not a sale to a person not a citizen of the United States under section 12132 of this title.

(c) Unless waived by the Secretary of Transportation, a person purchasing a vessel by court order under subsection (a)(1) of this section or from a mortgagee under subsection (a)(2) of this section must document the vessel under chapter 121 of this title.

(d) The vessel may be operated by the mortgagee not eligible to own a documented vessel only with the approval of the Secretary.

(e) A sale of a vessel contrary to this section is void.

(f) This section does not apply to a documented vessel that has been operated only for pleasure.

(Pub. L. 100-710, title I, §102(c), Nov. 23, 1988, 102 Stat. 4747; Pub. L. 104-324, title XI, §1118, Oct. 19, 1996, 110 Stat. 3973; Pub. L. 109-304, §15(32), Oct. 6, 2006, 120 Stat. 1704.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section	Source section (U.S. Code)
31329	46:961(f)

Section 31329 sets out certain restrictions on the court sale of a documented vessel.