

JAN 18 2008

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO INSURANCE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that reciprocal insurers
2 are insurers or insurance companies as set forth in section
3 431:1-202, Hawaii Revised Statutes. Unlike stock or mutual
4 insurers that are incorporated entities, a reciprocal insurer is
5 an unincorporated association of individuals, partnerships, or
6 corporations, which are called "subscribers," who act and
7 exchange insurance contracts through an attorney-in-fact common
8 to all subscribers.

9 Accordingly, section 431:3-108, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
10 defines a reciprocal insurer as "an unincorporated aggregation
11 of subscribers operating individually and collectively through
12 an attorney-in-fact common to all such persons to provide
13 reciprocal insurance among themselves." As a result, a
14 reciprocal insurer cannot conduct the business of insurance in
15 Hawaii without its attorney-in-fact. Since the reciprocal
16 insurer cannot accomplish anything without its designated



1 attorney-in-fact, a reciprocal insurer and its attorney-in-fact
2 are virtually indistinguishable.

3 All authorized insurers, are subject to the insurance
4 premium tax, which is imposed upon them in lieu of the general
5 excise and net income tax on the gross premiums received by such
6 insurers, pursuant to article 7 of chapter 431, Hawaii Revised
7 Statutes. For many years, insurance companies have been exempt
8 from paying general excise tax on gross premiums. This
9 exemption was enacted by the legislature in Act 141, Session
10 Laws of Hawaii 1935, and subsequently codified as section
11 237-23(a)(4), Hawaii Revised Statutes.

12 Act 286, Session Laws of Hawaii 1991, modified the general
13 excise tax exemption for insurance companies in section
14 237-29.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to specify that while the
15 gross income or gross proceeds of insurance companies authorized
16 to do business under chapter 431, Hawaii Revised Statutes, are
17 exempt from the general excise tax, this exemption does not
18 apply to gross income or gross proceeds from real property
19 rentals.

20 While chapter 431, Hawaii Revised Statutes, specifically
21 defines "insurer" in section 431:1-202, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
22 there is no definition of "insurance company" or "insurance



1 companies" anywhere in chapter 431, Hawaii Revised Statutes.
2 While "insurers" and "insurance companies" may refer to the same
3 thing, "insurers" and not "insurance companies" are authorized
4 to do business under chapter 431, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The
5 legislature finds that the ambiguous use of the term "insurance
6 companies" in section 237-29.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, should
7 be corrected to accurately reflect application to "an insurer"
8 or "insurers" as defined in chapter 431, Hawaii Revised
9 Statutes.

10 Existing law has been interpreted so that the gross income
11 or gross proceeds earned by a reciprocal insurer's attorney-in-
12 fact for services rendered on behalf of a reciprocal insurer are
13 subject to the general excise tax because the attorney-in-fact
14 is not expressly defined as being part of a reciprocal insurer
15 under section 237-29.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes. That
16 definition has resulted in double taxation and the unfair
17 treatment of reciprocal insurers and their attorneys-in-fact,
18 who unlike their stock or mutual insurer counterparts, are not
19 exempt from the general excise tax, which in turn may ultimately
20 affect the premium rates paid by subscribers who are insured by
21 the reciprocal insurer.



1 The purpose of this Act is to recognize that a reciprocal
2 insurer and its attorney-in-fact shall be considered as a single
3 entity for tax purposes and shall not be subject to double
4 taxation under Hawaii law. Specifically, this Act:

5 (1) Ensures that a reciprocal insurer and its attorney-in-
6 fact shall be considered as a single entity for tax
7 purposes;

8 (2) Clarifies that the general excise tax exemption
9 applies to insurers, and not insurance companies,
10 authorized to do business under chapter 431, Hawaii
11 Revised Statutes; and

12 (3) Makes other amendments for purposes of clarity and
13 consistency.

14 SECTION 2. Section 237-29.7, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
15 amended to read as follows:

16 "§237-29.7 Exemption of [~~insurance companies~~] insurers.

17 This chapter shall not apply to the gross income or gross
18 proceeds of [~~insurance companies~~] insurers authorized to do
19 business under chapter 431; except this exemption shall not
20 apply to any gross income or gross proceeds received after
21 December 31, 1991, as rents from investments in real property in
22 this State; provided that gross income or gross proceeds from



1 investments in real property received by [~~insurance companies~~]
2 insurers after December 31, 1991, under written contracts
3 entered into before January 1, 1992, that do not provide for the
4 passing on of taxes or tax increases shall not be taxed until
5 the contracts are renegotiated, renewed, or extended.

6 For purposes of this section, a reciprocal insurer and its
7 attorney-in-fact shall be considered singularly as an insurer."

8 SECTION 3. Section 431:1-202, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
9 amended to read as follows:

10 "§431:1-202 **Insurer defined.** Insurer means every person
11 engaged in the business of making contracts of insurance and
12 includes reciprocal insurers or interinsurance exchanges."

13 SECTION 4. Section 431:3-108, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
14 amended to read as follows:

15 "§431:3-108 **Reciprocal or reciprocal insurer.** A
16 reciprocal or reciprocal insurer means an unincorporated
17 aggregation of subscribers operating individually and
18 collectively through an attorney-in-fact common to all such
19 persons to provide reciprocal insurance among themselves."

20 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
21 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



S.B. NO. 2315

1 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

2

INTRODUCED BY: Russell. Kohb B/R



Report Title:

Taxation; Insurance Companies; Exemption; General Excise Taxes

Description:

Recognizes that a reciprocal insurer and its attorney-in-fact shall be considered as a single entity for tax purposes and not be subject to general excise taxes in order to avoid the effect of double taxation.

