

**§ 2415. Time for commencing actions brought by the United States**

(a) Subject to the provisions of section 2416 of this title, and except as otherwise provided by Congress, every action for money damages brought by the United States or an officer or agency thereof which is founded upon any contract express or implied in law or fact, shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within six years after the right of action accrues or within one year after final decisions have been rendered in applicable administrative proceedings required by contract or by law, whichever is later: *Provided*, That in the event of later partial payment or written acknowledgment of debt, the right of action shall be deemed to accrue again at the time of each such payment or acknowledgment: *Provided further*, That an action for money damages brought by the United States for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band or group of American Indians shall not be barred unless the complaint is filed more than six years and ninety days after the right of action accrued: *Provided further*, That an action for money damages which accrued on the date of enactment of this Act in accordance with subsection (g) brought by the United States for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band, or group of American Indians, or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status, shall not be barred unless the complaint is filed sixty days after the date of publication of the list required by section 4(c) of the Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982: *Provided*, That, for those claims that are on either of the two lists published pursuant to the Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982, any right of action shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within (1) one year after the Secretary of the Interior has published in the Federal Register a notice rejecting such claim or (2) three years after the date the Secretary of the Interior has submitted legislation or legislative report to Congress to resolve such claim or more than two years after a final decision has been rendered in applicable administrative proceedings required by contract or by law, whichever is later.

(b) Subject to the provisions of section 2416 of this title, and except as otherwise provided by Congress, every action for money damages brought by the United States or an officer or agency thereof which is founded upon a tort shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within three years after the right of action first accrues: *Provided*, That an action to recover damages resulting from a trespass on lands of the United States; an action to recover damages resulting from fire to such lands; an action to recover for diversion of money paid under a grant program; and an action for conversion of property of the United States may be brought within six years after the right of action accrues, except that such actions for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band or group of American Indians, including actions relating to allotted trust or restricted Indian lands, may be brought within six years and ninety days after the right of action accrues, except that such actions for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band, or group of American Indians, including actions relating

to allotted trust or restricted Indian lands, or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status which accrued on the date of enactment of this Act in accordance with subsection (g) may be brought on or before sixty days after the date of the publication of the list required by section 4(c) of the Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982: *Provided*, That, for those claims that are on either of the two lists published pursuant to the Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982, any right of action shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within (1) one year after the Secretary of the Interior has published in the Federal Register a notice rejecting such claim or (2) three years after the Secretary of the Interior has submitted legislation or legislative report to Congress to resolve such claim.

(c) Nothing herein shall be deemed to limit the time for bringing an action to establish the title to, or right of possession of, real or personal property.

(d) Subject to the provisions of section 2416 of this title and except as otherwise provided by Congress, every action for the recovery of money erroneously paid to or on behalf of any civilian employee of any agency of the United States or to or on behalf of any member or dependent of any member of the uniformed services of the United States, incident to the employment or services of such employee or member, shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within six years after the right of action accrues: *Provided*, That in the event of later partial payment or written acknowledgment of debt, the right of action shall be deemed to accrue again at the time of each such payment or acknowledgment.

(e) In the event that any action to which this section applies is timely brought and is thereafter dismissed without prejudice, the action may be recommenced within one year after such dismissal, regardless of whether the action would otherwise then be barred by this section. In any action so recommenced the defendant shall not be barred from interposing any claim which would not have been barred in the original action.

(f) The provisions of this section shall not prevent the assertion, in an action against the United States or an officer or agency thereof, of any claim of the United States or an officer or agency thereof against an opposing party, a co-party, or a third party that arises out of the transaction or occurrence that is the subject matter of the opposing party's claim. A claim of the United States or an officer or agency thereof that does not arise out of the transaction or occurrence that is the subject matter of the opposing party's claim may, if time-barred, be asserted only by way of offset and may be allowed in an amount not to exceed the amount of the opposing party's recovery.

(g) Any right of action subject to the provisions of this section which accrued prior to the date of enactment of this Act shall, for purposes of this section, be deemed to have accrued on the date of enactment of this Act.

(h) Nothing in this Act shall apply to actions brought under the Internal Revenue Code or incidental to the collection of taxes imposed by the United States.

(i) The provisions of this section shall not prevent the United States or an officer or agency thereof from collecting any claim of the United States by means of administrative offset, in accordance with section 3716 of title 31.

(Added Pub. L. 89-505, § 1, July 18, 1966, 80 Stat. 304; amended Pub. L. 92-353, July 18, 1972, 86 Stat. 499; Pub. L. 92-485, Oct. 13, 1972, 86 Stat. 803; Pub. L. 95-64, July 11, 1977, 91 Stat. 268; Pub. L. 95-103, Aug. 15, 1977, 91 Stat. 842; Pub. L. 96-217, § 1, Mar. 27, 1980, 94 Stat. 126; Pub. L. 97-365, § 9, Oct. 25, 1982, 96 Stat. 1754; Pub. L. 97-394, title I, § 2, Dec. 30, 1982, 96 Stat. 1976; Pub. L. 97-452, § 2(d)(2), Jan. 12, 1983, 96 Stat. 2478; Pub. L. 98-250, § 4(a), Apr. 3, 1984, 98 Stat. 118.)

#### REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of enactment of this Act, referred to in subsecs. (a), (b), and (g), means the date of enactment of Pub. L. 89-505, which was approved July 18, 1966.

The Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982, referred to in subsecs. (a) and (b), is Pub. L. 97-394, title I, §§ 2-6, Dec. 30, 1982, 96 Stat. 1976-1978, which amended this section and enacted provisions set out as notes below. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1982 Amendment note set out below and Tables.

This Act, referred to in subsec. (h), probably means Pub. L. 89-505, July 18, 1966, 80 Stat. 304, which enacted this section and section 2416 of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Tables.

#### AMENDMENTS

1984—Subsecs. (a), (b). Pub. L. 98-250 substituted “Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982” for “Indian Claims Act of 1982” wherever appearing.

1983—Subsec. (i). Pub. L. 97-452 substituted “section 3716 of title 31” for “section 5 of the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966”.

1982—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 97-394, § 2(a), substituted “sixty days after the date of publication of the list required by section 4(c) of the Indian Claims Act of 1982: *Provided*, That, for those claims that are on either of the two lists published pursuant to the Indian Claims Act of 1982, any right of action shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within (1) one year after the Secretary of the Interior has published in the Federal Register a notice rejecting such claim or (2) three years after the date the Secretary of the Interior has submitted legislation or legislative report to Congress to resolve such claim” for “after December 31, 1982” in third proviso.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 97-394, § 2(b), substituted “sixty days after the date of the publication of the list required by section 4(c) of the Indian Claims Act of 1982: *Provided*, That, for those claims that are on either of the two lists published pursuant to the Indian Claims Act of 1982, any right of action shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within (1) one year after the Secretary of the Interior has published in the Federal Register a notice rejecting such claim or (2) three years after the Secretary of the Interior has submitted legislation or legislative report to Congress to resolve such claim” for “December 31, 1982” at end of proviso.

Subsec. (i). Pub. L. 97-365 added subsec. (i).

1980—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 96-217, § 1(a), substituted “December 31, 1982” for “April 30, 1980”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 96-217, § 1(b), substituted “December 31, 1982” for “April 1, 1980”.

1977—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 95-103, § 1(a), substituted “after April 1, 1980” for “after August 18, 1977”.

Pub. L. 95-64, § 1(a), substituted “unless the complaint is filed after August 18, 1977” for “unless the complaint is filed more than eleven years after the right of action accrued” in proviso covering actions for money damages brought by the United States for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band, or group of American Indians,

or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status based upon rights of action which accrued on July 18, 1966, in accordance with subsec. (g).

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 95-103, § 1(b), substituted “on or before April 1, 1980” for “on or before August 18, 1977”.

Pub. L. 95-64, § 1(b), substituted “may be brought on or before August 18, 1977” for “may be brought within eleven years after the right of action accrues” in proviso covering actions for or on behalf of recognized tribes, bands, or groups of American Indians, including actions related to allotted trust or restricted Indian lands, or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status based upon rights of action which accrued on July 18, 1966, in accordance with subsec. (g).

1972—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 92-485, § 1(a), inserted proviso relating to actions for money damages brought by the United States for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band, or group of American Indians, or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status.

Pub. L. 92-353, § 1(a), inserted proviso that an action for money damages brought by the United States on behalf of American Indians shall not be barred unless the complaint is filed more than six years and ninety days after the right of action accrued.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 92-485, § 1(b), inserted exception relating to actions for or on behalf of a recognized tribe, band, or group of American Indians, including actions relating to allotted trust or restricted Indian lands, or on behalf of an individual Indian whose land is held in trust or restricted status.

Pub. L. 92-353, § 1(b), increased the period of limitation to six years and ninety days for actions brought by the United States under the subsection for or on behalf of American Indians.

#### SHORT TITLE OF 1982 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 97-394, title I, § 1, Dec. 30, 1982, 96 Stat. 1976, as amended by Pub. L. 98-250, § 4(b), Apr. 3, 1984, 98 Stat. 119, provided in part that: “Sections 2 through 6 of this Act [amending this section and enacting provisions set out below] may be cited as the ‘Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982.’”

#### PUBLICATION OF LIST OF INDIAN CLAIMS; ADDITIONAL CLAIMS; TIME TO COMMENCE ACTION; REJECTION OF CLAIMS; CLAIMS RESOLVED BY LEGISLATION

Pub. L. 97-394, title I, §§ 3-6, Dec. 30, 1982, 96 Stat. 1977, 1978, provided that:

“SEC. 3. (a) Within ninety days after the enactment of this Act [Dec. 30, 1982], the Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Secretary’) shall publish in the Federal Register a list of all claims accruing to any tribe, band or group of Indians or individual Indian on or before July 18, 1966, which have at any time been identified by or submitted to the Secretary under the ‘Statute of Limitation Project’ undertaken by the Department of the Interior and which, but for the provisions of this Act [see Short Title of 1982 Amendment note above], would be barred by the provisions of section 2415 of title 28, United States Code: *Provided*, That the Secretary shall have the discretion to exclude from such list any matter which was erroneously identified as a claim and which has no legal merit whatsoever.

“(b) Such list shall group the claims on a reservation-by-reservation, tribe-by-tribe, or State-by-State basis, as appropriate, and shall state the nature and geographic location of each claim and only such other additional information as may be needed to identify specifically such claims.

“(c) Within thirty days after the publication of this list, the Secretary shall provide a copy of the Indian Claims Limitation Act of 1982 [see Short Title of 1982 Amendment note above] and a copy of the Federal Register containing this list, or such parts as may be pertinent, to each Indian tribe, band or group whose rights or the rights of whose members could be affected by the

provisions of section 2415 of title 28, United States Code.

“SEC. 4. (a) Any tribe, band or group of Indians or any individual Indian shall have one hundred and eighty days after the date of the publication in the Federal Register of the list provided for in section 3 of this Act to submit to the Secretary any additional specific claim or claims which such tribe, band or group of Indians or individual Indian believes may be affected by section 2415 of title 28, United States Code, and desires to have considered for litigation or legislation by the United States.

“(b) Any such claim submitted to the Secretary shall be accompanied by a statement identifying the nature of the claim, the date when the right of action allegedly accrued, the names of the potential plaintiffs and defendants, if known, and such other information needed to identify and evaluate such claim.

“(c) Not more than thirty days after the expiration of the one hundred and eighty day period provided for in subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register a list containing the additional claims submitted during such period: *Provided*, That the Secretary shall have the discretion to exclude from such list any matter which has not been sufficiently identified as a claim.

“SEC. 5. (a) Any right of action shall be barred sixty days after the date of the publication of the list required by section 4(c) of this Act for those pre-1966 claims which, but for the provisions of this Act [see Short Title of 1982 Amendment note above], would have been barred by section 2415 of title 28, United States Code, unless such claims are included on either of the lists required by section 3 or 4(c) of this Act.

“(b) If the Secretary decides to reject for litigation any of the claims or groups or categories of claims contained on either of the lists required by section 3 or 4(c) of this Act, he shall send a report to the appropriate tribe, band, or group of Indians, whose rights or the rights of whose members could be affected by such rejection, advising them of his decision. The report shall identify the nature and geographic location of each rejected claim and the name of the potential plaintiffs and defendants if they are known or can be reasonably ascertained and shall, briefly, state the reasons why such claim or claims were rejected for litigation. Where the Secretary knows or can reasonably ascertain the identity of any of the potential individual Indian plaintiffs and their present addresses, he shall provide them with written notice of such rejection. Upon the request of any Indian claimant, the Secretary shall, without undue delay, provide to such claimant any nonprivileged research materials or evidence gathered by the United States in the documentation of such claim.

“(c) The Secretary, as soon as possible after providing the report required by subsection (b) of this section, shall publish a notice in the Federal Register identifying the claims covered in such report. With respect to any claim covered by such report, any right of action shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within one year after the date of publication in the Federal Register.

“SEC. 6. (a) If the Secretary determines that any claim or claims contained in either of the lists as provided in sections 3 or 4(c) of this Act is not appropriate for litigation, but determines that such claims may be appropriately resolved by legislation, he shall submit to the Congress legislation to resolve such claims or shall submit to Congress a report setting out options for legislative resolution of such claims.

“(b) Any right of action on claims covered by such legislation or report shall be barred unless the complaint is filed within 3 years after the date of submission of such legislation or legislative report to Congress.”

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RESPECTING APPROPRIATENESS OF RESOLUTION BY LITIGATION OF UNRESOLVED INDIAN CLAIMS

Section 2 of Pub. L. 96-217 provided that: “Not later than June 30, 1981, the Secretary of the Interior, after

consultation with the Attorney General, shall submit to the Congress legislative proposals to resolve those Indian claims subject to the amendments made by the first section of this Act [amending this section] that the Secretary of the Interior or the Attorney General believes are not appropriate to resolve by litigation.”

**§ 2416. Time for commencing actions brought by the United States—Exclusions**

For the purpose of computing the limitations periods established in section 2415, there shall be excluded all periods during which—

(a) the defendant or the res is outside the United States, its territories and possessions, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; or

(b) the defendant is exempt from legal process because of infancy, mental incompetence, diplomatic immunity, or for any other reason; or

(c) facts material to the right of action are not known and reasonably could not be known by an official of the United States charged with the responsibility to act in the circumstances; or

(d) the United States is in a state of war declared pursuant to article I, section 8, of the Constitution of the United States.

(Added Pub. L. 89-505, §1, July 18, 1966, 80 Stat. 305.)

**CHAPTER 163—FINES, PENALTIES AND FORFEITURES**

Sec.	
2461.	Mode of recovery.
2462.	Time for commencing proceedings.
2463.	Property taken under revenue law not releasable.
2464.	Security; special bond.
2465.	Return of property to claimant; liability for wrongful seizure; attorney fees, costs, and interest.
2466.	Fugitive disentitlement.
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AMENDMENTS

2000—Pub. L. 106-185, §§ 4(b), 14(b), 15(b), Apr. 25, 2000, 114 Stat. 213, 219, 221, substituted “Return of property to claimant; liability for wrongful seizure; attorney fees, costs, and interest” for “Return of property to claimant; certificate of reasonable cause; liability for wrongful seizure” in item 2465 and added items 2466 and 2467.

**§ 2461. Mode of recovery**

(a) Whenever a civil fine, penalty or pecuniary forfeiture is prescribed for the violation of an Act of Congress without specifying the mode of recovery or enforcement thereof, it may be recovered in a civil action.

(b) Unless otherwise provided by Act of Congress, whenever a forfeiture of property is prescribed as a penalty for violation of an Act of Congress and the seizure takes place on the high seas or on navigable waters within the admiralty and maritime jurisdiction of the United States, such forfeiture may be enforced by libel in admiralty but in cases of seizures on land the forfeiture may be enforced by a proceeding by libel which shall conform as near as may be to proceedings in admiralty.

(c) If a person is charged in a criminal case with a violation of an Act of Congress for which