

**Chapter 18.11 RCW
AUCTIONEERS**

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Limitations on power of

*cities and towns to regulate auctioneers: RCW 35.21.690.
counties to regulate auctioneers: RCW 36.71.070.*

Mock auctions: RCW 9.45.070.

Motor vehicle auction companies, place of business: RCW 46.70.023.

Pawnbrokers and secondhand dealers: Chapter 19.60 RCW.

RCW 18.11.050 Definitions. Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Auctioneer" means an individual who calls bids at an auction.

(2) "Auction" means a transaction conducted by means of exchanges between an auctioneer and the members of his or her audience, constituting a series of invitations for offers for the purchase of goods or real property made by the auctioneer, offers by members of

the audience, and the acceptance of the highest or most favorable offer.

(3) "Auction mart" means any fixed or established place designed, intended, or used for the conduct of auctions.

(4) "Auction company" means a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, or other legal or commercial entity that sells or offers to sell goods or real estate at auction or arranges, sponsors, or manages auctions. The term "auction company" shall exclude any sole proprietorship owned by an auctioneer licensed under this chapter whose gross annual sales do not exceed twenty-five thousand dollars.

(5) "Department" means the department of licensing.

(6) "Director" means the director of licensing.

(7) "Person" means an individual, partnership, association, corporation, or any other form of business enterprise.

(8) "Goods" mean wares, chattels, merchandise, or personal property owned or consigned, which may be lawfully kept or offered for sale.

(9) "License" means state authority to operate as an auctioneer or auction company, which authority is conferred by issuance of a certificate of registration subject to annual renewal.

(10) "Licensee" means an auctioneer or auction company registered under this chapter. [1986 c 324 s 2; 1982 c 205 s 5.]

RCW 18.11.060 Administration of chapter—Fees. This chapter shall be administered under chapter 43.24 RCW. The director shall set registration and renewal fees in accordance with RCW 43.24.086. If an auctioneer or auction company does not renew a license before it expires, the renewal shall be subject to payment of a penalty fee. [1986 c 324 s 3; 1982 c 205 s 2.]

RCW 18.11.070 License required—Exceptions. (1) It is unlawful for any person to act as an auctioneer or for an auction company to engage in any business in this state without a license.

(2) This chapter does not apply to:

(a) An auction of goods conducted by an individual who personally owns those goods and who did not acquire those goods for resale;

(b) An auction conducted by or under the direction of a public authority;

(c) An auction held under judicial order in the settlement of a decedent's estate;

(d) An auction which is required by law to be at auction;

(e) An auction conducted by or on behalf of a political organization or a charitable corporation or association if the person conducting the sale receives no compensation;

(f) An auction of livestock or agricultural products which is conducted under chapter 16.65 or 20.01 RCW. Auctions not regulated under chapter 16.65 or 20.01 RCW shall be fully subject to the provisions of this chapter;

(g) An auction held under chapter 19.150 RCW;

(h) An auction of an abandoned vehicle under chapter 46.55 RCW;

or

(i) An auction of fur pelts conducted by any cooperative association organized under chapter 23.86 RCW or its wholly owned subsidiary. In order to qualify for this exemption, the fur pelts must

be from members of the association. However, the association, without loss of the exemption, may auction pelts that it purchased from nonmembers for the purpose of completing lots or orders, so long as the purchased pelts do not exceed fifteen percent of the total pelts auctioned. [1999 c 398 s 1; 1989 c 307 s 43; 1988 c 240 s 19; 1986 c 324 s 4; 1982 c 205 s 6.]

Legislative finding—1989 c 307: See note following RCW 23.86.007.

Application—1989 c 307: See RCW 23.86.900.

RCW 18.11.075 Secondhand property, when exempt. The department of licensing may exempt, by rule, secondhand property bought or received on consignment or sold at an auction conducted by a licensed auctioneer or auction company from RCW 19.60.050 or 19.60.055. [1993 c 348 s 1.]

RCW 18.11.085 Auctioneer certificate of registration—Requirements. Every individual, before acting as an auctioneer, shall obtain an auctioneer certificate of registration. To be licensed as an auctioneer, an individual shall meet all of the following requirements:

(1) Be at least eighteen years of age or sponsored by a licensed auctioneer.

(2) File with the department a completed application on a form prescribed by the director.

(3) Be registered with the department of revenue pursuant to RCW 82.32.030.

(4) Pay the auctioneer registration fee required under the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(5) Except as otherwise provided under RCW 18.11.121, file with the department an auctioneer surety bond in the amount and form required by RCW 18.11.121 and the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(6) Have no disqualifications under RCW 18.11.160 or 18.235.130. [2019 c 442 s 1; 2002 c 86 s 206; 1987 c 336 s 1; 1986 c 324 s 5.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.095 Auction company certificate of registration—Requirements. Every person, before operating an auction company as defined in RCW 18.11.050, shall obtain an auction company certificate of registration.

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, to be licensed as an auction company, a person shall meet all of the following requirements:

(a) File with the department a completed application on a form prescribed by the director.

(b) Sign a notarized statement included on the application form that all auctioneers hired by the auction company to do business in the state shall be properly registered under this chapter.

(c) Be registered with the department of revenue pursuant to RCW 82.32.030 and, if an ownership entity other than sole proprietor or general partnership, be registered with the secretary of state.

(d) Pay the auction company registration fee required under the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(e) File with the department an auction company surety bond in the amount and form required by RCW 18.11.121 and the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(f) Have no disqualifications under RCW 18.11.160 or 18.235.130.

(2) An auction company shall not be charged a license fee if it is a sole proprietorship or a partnership owned by an auctioneer or auctioneers, each of whom is licensed under this chapter, and if it has in effect a surety bond or bonds or other security approved by the director in the amount that would otherwise be required for an auction company to be granted or to retain a license under RCW 18.11.121. [2019 c 442 s 2; 2002 c 86 s 207; 1987 c 336 s 5; 1986 c 324 s 6.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.100 Nonresident auctioneers and auction companies.

(1) Nonresident auctioneers and auction companies are required to comply with the provisions of this chapter, chapter 18.235 RCW, and the rules of the department as a condition of conducting business in the state.

(2) The application of a nonresident under this chapter shall constitute the appointment of the secretary of state as the applicant's agent upon whom process may be served in any action or proceeding against the applicant arising out of a transaction or operation connected with or incidental to the business of an auctioneer or an auction company. [2002 c 86 s 208; 1986 c 324 s 7; 1985 c 7 s 9; 1982 c 205 s 8.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.121 Surety bond or security required. (1) Except as provided in this section, each auctioneer and each auction company shall as a condition to the granting and retention of a license have on file with the department an approved surety bond or other security in lieu of a bond. However, if an auction company is a sole proprietorship or a partnership and has on file with the department a surety bond or other security approved by the director in the amount that would otherwise be required for an auction company to be granted or to retain a license under this section, then no separate bond or bonds shall be required for the sole proprietor or any individual partner to act as an auctioneer for the sole proprietorship or

partnership. The bond or other security of an auctioneer shall be in the amount of five thousand dollars.

(2) The bond or other security of an auction company shall be in an amount not less than five thousand dollars and not more than twenty-five thousand dollars. The amount shall be based on the value of the goods and real estate sold at auctions conducted, supervised, arranged, sponsored, or managed by the auction company during the previous calendar year or, for a new auction company, the estimated value of the goods and real estate to be sold at auction during the current calendar year. The director shall establish by rule the procedures to be used for determining the amount of auction company bonds or other security.

(3) In lieu of a surety bond, an auctioneer or auction company may deposit with the department any of the following:

(a) Savings accounts assigned to the director;

(b) Certificates of deposit payable to the director;

(c) Investment certificates or share accounts assigned to the director; or

(d) Any other security acceptable to the director.

All obligations and remedies relating to surety bonds authorized by this section shall apply to deposits filed with the director.

(4) Each bond shall comply with all of the following:

(a) Be executed by the person seeking the license as principal and by a corporate surety licensed to do business in the state;

(b) Be payable to the state;

(c) Be conditioned on compliance with all provisions of this chapter and the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter, including payment of any administrative fines assessed against the licensee; and

(d) Remain in effect for one year after expiration, revocation, or suspension of the license.

(5) If any licensee fails or is alleged to have failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter or the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter, the director may hold a hearing in accordance with chapter 34.05 RCW, determine those persons who are proven claimants under the bond, and, if appropriate, distribute the bond proceeds to the proven claimants. The state or an injured person may also bring an action against the bond in superior court. The liability of the surety shall be only for actual damages and shall not exceed the amount of the bond.

(6) Damages that exceed the amount of the bond may be remedied by actions against the auctioneer or the auction company under RCW 18.11.260 or other available remedies at law. [1987 c 336 s 2; 1986 c 324 s 8.]

RCW 18.11.130 Written contract required—Penalty. No goods or real estate shall be sold at auction until the auctioneer or auction company has entered into a written contract or agreement with the owner or consignor in duplicate which contains the terms and conditions upon which the licensee receives or accepts the property for sale at auction.

A person who violates this section shall be subject to an administrative fine in a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars for each violation. [1986 c 324 s 9; 1982 c 205 s 11.]

RCW 18.11.140 Written records required—Penalty. Every person engaged in the business of selling goods or real estate at auction shall keep written records for a period of three years available for inspection which indicate clearly the name and address of the owner or consignor of the goods or real estate, the terms of acceptance and sale, and a copy of the signed written contract required by RCW 18.11.130. A person who violates this section shall be subject to an administrative fine in a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars for each violation. [1986 c 324 s 10; 1982 c 205 s 12.]

RCW 18.11.150 Display of certificate of registration or renewal card required—Penalty. All auctioneers and auction companies shall have their certificates of registration prominently displayed in their offices and the current renewal card or a facsimile available on demand at all auctions conducted or supervised by the licensee.

A person who violates this section shall be subject to an administrative fine in a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars for each violation. [1986 c 324 s 11; 1982 c 205 s 13.]

RCW 18.11.160 License—Prohibition on issuance—Disciplinary action—License suspension. (1) Except as provided in RCW 9.97.020, no license shall be issued by the department to any person who has been convicted of forgery, embezzlement, obtaining money under false pretenses, extortion, criminal conspiracy, fraud, theft, receiving stolen goods, unlawful issuance of checks or drafts, or other similar offense, or to any partnership of which the person is a member, or to any association or corporation of which the person is an officer or in which as a stockholder the person has or exercises a controlling interest either directly or indirectly.

(2) In addition to the unprofessional conduct described in RCW 18.235.130, the director has the authority to take disciplinary action for any of the following conduct, acts, or conditions:

(a) Underreporting to the department of sales figures so that the auctioneer or auction company surety bond is in a lower amount than required by law;

(b) Nonpayment of an administrative fine prior to renewal of a license; and

(c) Any other violations of this chapter.

(3) The department shall immediately suspend the license of a person who has been certified pursuant to RCW 74.20A.320 by the department of social and health services as a person who is not in compliance with a support order. If the person has continued to meet all other requirements for reinstatement during the suspension, reissuance of the license shall be automatic upon the department's receipt of a release issued by the department of social and health services stating that the licensee is in compliance with the order. [2016 c 81 s 8; 2002 c 86 s 209; 1997 c 58 s 814; 1986 c 324 s 12; 1982 c 205 s 14.]

Finding—Conflict with federal requirements—2016 c 81: See notes following RCW 9.97.010.

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

Short title—Part headings, captions, table of contents not law—Exemptions and waivers from federal law—Conflict with federal requirements—Severability—1997 c 58: See RCW 74.08A.900 through 74.08A.904.

Effective dates—Intent—1997 c 58: See notes following RCW 74.20A.320.

RCW 18.11.170 Unauthorized practice—Penalties. Any auctioneer and any auction company that conducts business within this state without a license or after the suspension or revocation of his or her license shall be fined by the department five hundred dollars for the first offense and one thousand dollars for the second or subsequent offense. [1986 c 324 s 13; 1982 c 205 s 15.]

RCW 18.11.180 Compensation of nonlicensed person—Penalties. It shall be unlawful for a licensed auctioneer or licensed auction company to pay compensation in money or otherwise to anyone not licensed under this chapter to render any service or to do any act forbidden under this chapter to be rendered or performed except by licensees. The department may fine any person who violates this section five hundred dollars for the first offense and one thousand dollars for the second or subsequent offense. Furthermore, the violation of this section by any licensee shall be, in the discretion of the department, sufficient cause for taking any actions listed under RCW 18.235.110. [2002 c 86 s 210; 1986 c 324 s 14; 1982 c 205 s 16.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.190 Actions for compensation for services. No action or suit may be instituted in any court of this state by any person, partnership, association, or corporation not licensed as an auctioneer and as an auction company to recover compensation for an act done or service rendered which is prohibited under this chapter. [1986 c 324 s 15; 1982 c 205 s 17.]

RCW 18.11.200 Director—Authority to adopt rules. The director shall adopt rules for the purpose of carrying out and developing this chapter, including rules governing the conduct of inspections. [2002 c 86 s 211; 1986 c 324 s 16; 1982 c 205 s 18.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.205 Director—Authority to impose administrative fines. The director shall impose and collect the administrative fines authorized by this chapter. Any administrative fine imposed under this chapter or the agency rules adopted pursuant to this chapter may be appealed under chapter 34.05 RCW, the administrative procedure act. Assessment of an administrative fine shall not preclude the initiation of any disciplinary, civil, or criminal action for the same or similar violations. [1986 c 324 s 17.]

RCW 18.11.210 Newspaper advertisements—Name and license number required—Penalty. All newspaper advertising regarding auctions that is purchased by an auctioneer or an auction company licensed under this chapter shall include the auctioneer's or auction company's name and license number. Any auctioneer or auction company that violates this section is subject to an administrative fine of one hundred dollars per violation. [1986 c 324 s 19; 1984 c 189 s 1.]

RCW 18.11.220 Rights of clients. The client of an auctioneer or auction company has a right to (1) an accounting for any money that the auctioneer or auction company receives from the sale of the client's goods, (2) payment of all money due to the client within twenty-one calendar days unless the parties have mutually agreed in writing to another time of payment, and (3) bring an action against the surety bond or other security filed in lieu of the surety bond for any violation of this chapter or the rules adopted pursuant to this chapter. [1987 c 336 s 3; 1986 c 324 s 20.]

RCW 18.11.230 Trust account required for client funds. Auction proceeds due to a client that are received by the auctioneer or auction company and not paid to the client within twenty-four hours of the sale shall be deposited no later than the next business day by the auctioneer or auction company in a trust account for clients in a bank, savings and loan association, mutual savings bank, or licensed escrow agent located in the state. The auctioneer or auction company shall draw on the trust account only to pay proceeds to clients, or such other persons who are legally entitled to such proceeds, and to obtain the sums due to the auctioneer or auction company for services as set out in the written contract required under RCW 18.11.130. Funds in the trust account shall not be subject to the debt of the auctioneer or auction company and shall not be used for personal reasons or other business reasons. [1987 c 336 s 4; 1986 c 324 s 21.]

RCW 18.11.240 Bidding—Prohibited practices—Penalty. The following requirements shall apply to bidding at auctions:

(1) An auctioneer conducting an auction and an auction company where an auction is being held shall not bid on or offer to buy any goods or real property at the auction unless the auctioneer or the auction company discloses the name of the person on whose behalf the bid or offer is being made.

(2) An auctioneer and an auction company shall not use any method of bidding at an auction that will allow goods or real property to be

purchased in an undisclosed manner on behalf of the auctioneer or auction company.

(3) At a public auction conducted or supervised by an auctioneer or auction company, the auctioneer or auction company shall not fictitiously raise any bid, knowingly permit any person to make a fictitious bid, or employ or use another person to act as a bidder or buyer.

(4) All goods or real property offered for sale at an auction shall be subject to a reserve or a confirmation from the owner or consignor unless otherwise indicated by the auctioneer or auction company. Except as provided in this subsection, an auctioneer or auction company shall not use any method of bidding at an auction that allows the auctioneer or auction company to avoid selling any property offered for sale at auction.

(5) A licensee who violates any provision of this section shall be subject to an administrative fine in a sum not exceeding five hundred dollars for each violation. [1986 c 324 s 22.]

RCW 18.11.250 Limitation on real estate auctions. Auctioneers and auction companies may call for bids on real estate but only persons licensed under chapter 18.85 RCW may perform activities regulated under that chapter. [1986 c 324 s 23.]

RCW 18.11.260 Application of Consumer Protection Act. A violation of this chapter is hereby declared to affect the public interest and to offend public policy. Any violation, act, or practice by an auctioneer or auction company which is unfair or deceptive, shall constitute an unfair or deceptive act or practice in violation of RCW 19.86.020. The remedies and sanctions provided in this section shall not preclude application of other available remedies and sanctions. [1986 c 324 s 25.]

RCW 18.11.280 Uniform regulation of business and professions act. The uniform regulation of business and professions act, chapter 18.235 RCW, governs unlicensed practice, the issuance and denial of licenses, and the discipline of licensees under this chapter. [2002 c 86 s 212.]

Effective dates—2002 c 86: See note following RCW 18.08.340.

Part headings not law—Severability—2002 c 86: See RCW 18.235.902 and 18.235.903.

RCW 18.11.290 Military training or experience. An applicant with military training or experience satisfies the training or experience requirements of this chapter unless the director determines that the military training or experience is not substantially equivalent to the standards of this state. [2011 c 351 s 2.]

RCW 18.11.901 Short title. This chapter may be known and cited as the "auctioneer registration act." [1986 c 324 s 1.]

RCW 18.11.903 Effective date—1986 c 324. This act shall take effect on July 1, 1986. [1986 c 324 s 29.]