



# EXPEDITED RULE MAKING

**CR-105 (June 2004)**  
(Implements RCW 34.05.353)  
**EXPEDITED RULE MAKING ONLY**

**Agency:** Department of Revenue

**Title of rule and other identifying information:**

- WAC 458-61A-100 *Real estate excise tax—Overview;*
- WAC 458-61A-101 *Taxability of the transfer or acquisition of the controlling interest of an entity with an interest in real property located in this state;*
- WAC 458-61A-102 *Definitions;*
- WAC 458-61A-107 *Option to purchase;* and
- WAC 458-61A-301 *Payment of tax, collection responsibility, audit responsibility, and tax rulings .*

### NOTICE

**THIS RULE IS BEING PROPOSED UNDER AN EXPEDITED RULE-MAKING PROCESS THAT WILL ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR THE AGENCY TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS, PREPARE A SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT, OR PROVIDE RESPONSES TO THE CRITERIA FOR A SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE RULE. IF YOU OBJECT TO THIS USE OF THE EXPEDITED RULE-MAKING PROCESS, YOU MUST EXPRESS YOUR OBJECTIONS IN WRITING AND THEY MUST BE SENT TO**

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**AND RECEIVED BY:** May 23, 2011

**Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:**

The Department proposes to amend these rules to recognize provisions of 2ESSB 6143, Part II *Tax Avoidance Transactions*, sections 207-213. The proposed rule amendments include the following legislative changes and clarifications:

- the date on which an option agreement is executed is the date on which the transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest pursuant to the option is deemed to occur, for the purpose of determining whether a controlling interest was transferred or acquired within a 12-month period;
- the Department may collect REET on the transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest in a corporation from either the corporation or the buyer, or, if the corporation is not publicly traded, from the seller;
- a parent corporation of a wholly-owned subsidiary is responsible for REET if the subsidiary transfers real property to a third party and then dissolves before payment of the tax;
- providing notice to the Department within 30 days of a sale no longer exempts a buyer from liability for REET that has not been paid by the seller; and
- a lien for any unpaid REET attaches to each parcel of property in this state owned by an entity in which a controlling interest has been transferred.

**Statutory authority for adoption:** RCW 82.45.150, 82.32.300, and 82.01.060

**Statute being implemented:** provisions of chapter 82.61A RCW and 2ESSB 6143, Part II

**Is rule necessary because of a:**

- |                         |                              |  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Federal Law?            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Federal Court Decision? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| State Court Decision?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

If yes, CITATION:

**Date** March 21, 2011

**Name** Alan R. Lynn

**Signature**

**Title**  
Rules Coordinator

**CODE REVISER USE ONLY**

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FILED

**DATE: March 21, 2011**

**TIME: 3:28 PM**

**WSR 11-07-068**

**Name of proponent:** Department of Revenue

- Private
- Public
- Governmental

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**Agency comments or recommendations, if any, as to statutory language, implementation, enforcement, and fiscal matters:** None

This rule draft is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that does not require the agency to hold public hearings. Under no circumstances is this proposed rule to be used as a basis for determining tax liability or eligibility for a tax deduction, exemption, or credit.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 05-23-093, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05)

**WAC 458-61A-100 Real estate excise tax--Overview.** (1)

**Introduction.** Chapter 82.45 RCW imposes an excise tax on every sale of real estate in the state of Washington. All sales of real property in this state are subject to the real estate excise tax unless specifically exempted by chapter 82.45 RCW and these rules. The general provisions for the administration of the state's excise taxes contained in chapter 82.32 RCW apply to the real estate excise tax, except as provided in RCW 82.45.150. This chapter provides applicable definitions, describes procedures for payment, collection, and reporting of the tax, explains when penalties and interest are imposed on late payment, describes those transactions exempted from imposition of the tax, and explains the procedures for refunds and appeals.

**Legislation adopted in 2010.** Effective May 1, 2010, chapter 23, Laws of 2010 sp. sess. established new requirements regarding:

(a) Sales of real estate that result from the transfer of a controlling interest in an entity that owns real property. See WAC 458-61A-101.

(b) Enforcement of tax liability. See WAC 458-61A-301.

**(2) Imposition of tax.**

(a) The taxes imposed are due at the time the sale occurs, are the obligation of the seller, and, in most instances, are collected by the county upon presentation of the documents of sale for recording in the public records.

(b) If there is a sale of the controlling interest in an entity that owns real property in this state, the tax is paid to the department at the time the interest is transferred. See WAC 458-61A-101.

(3) **Rate of tax.** The rate of the tax is set forth in RCW 82.45.060. Counties, cities, and towns may impose additional taxes on sales of real property on the same incidences, collection, and reporting methods authorized under chapter 82.45 RCW. See chapter 82.46 RCW.

(4) **Nonprofit organizations.** Transfers to or from an organization exempt from ad valorem property taxes under chapter 84.36 RCW, or from federal income tax, because of the organization's nonprofit or charitable status are nevertheless subject to the real estate excise tax unless specifically exempt under chapter 82.45 RCW or these rules.

(5) **Sales in Indian country.** A sale of real property

located in Indian country by an enrolled tribe or tribal member is not subject to real estate excise tax. See WAC 458-20-192 for complete information regarding the taxability of transactions involving Indians and Indian country.

This rule draft is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that does not require the agency to hold public hearings. Under no circumstances is this proposed rule to be used as a basis for determining tax liability or eligibility for a tax deduction, exemption, or credit.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 05-23-093, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05)

**WAC 458-61A-101 Taxability of the transfer or acquisition of the controlling interest of an entity with an interest in real property located in this state.** (1) **Introduction.** The transfer of a controlling interest in an entity that has an interest in real property in this state is considered a taxable sale of the entity's real property for purposes of the real estate excise tax under chapter 82.45 RCW. This rule explains the application of the tax on those transfers.

Legislation adopted in 2010. Effective May 1, 2010, chapter 23, Laws of 2010 1st sp. sess. established new requirements regarding option agreements and regarding enforcement of tax liability. See subsections (3) and (6) through (8) of this section.

(2) **Definitions.** For the purposes of this chapter, the following definitions apply unless the context requires otherwise.

(a) **"Controlling interest"** means:

(i) In the case of a corporation, either fifty percent or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of stock of the corporation entitled to vote, or fifty percent of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in the voting stock of the corporation; and

(ii) In the case of a partnership, association, trust, or other entity, fifty percent or more of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in such partnership, association, trust, or other entity.

**Examples.** The following examples, while not exhaustive, illustrate some of the circumstances in which the transfer of an interest in an entity may or may not be taxable. These examples should be used only as a general guide. The status of each situation must be determined after a review of all of the facts and circumstances.

(A) Able and Baker each own 40% of the voting shares of a corporation, Flyaway, Inc. Charlie, Delta, Echo, and Frank each own 5% voting shares. Charlie acquires Baker's 40% interest, and Delta's and Echo's 5% interests. This is a taxable acquisition because a controlling interest (50% or more) was acquired by Charlie (40% from Baker plus 5% from Delta and 5% from Echo). However, if Charlie, Delta, and Echo were to

transfer their shares (totaling 15%) to Able, those transfers would not be taxable. Although Able would own 55% of the corporation, only a 15% interest was transferred and acquired, so the acquisition by Able is not taxable.

(B) Melody LLC consists of a general partner and three limited partners, each possessing a 25% interest. Even though the general partner controls the management and daily operations, a 25% interest is not a controlling interest. If someone were to acquire a 50% or greater interest from any of the existing partners, there would be a taxable acquisition of a controlling interest. If one partner acquires an additional 25% interest from another partner for a total of a 50% interest, no transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest occurs because less than 50% is transferred and acquired.

(C) Anne, Bobby, Chelsea, and David each own 25% of the voting shares of a corporation. The corporation redeems the shares of Bobby, Chelsea, and David. Anne now owns all the outstanding shares of the corporation. A taxable transfer occurred when the corporation redeemed the shares of Bobby, Chelsea, and David.

(D) Andrew owns 75% of the voting shares of a corporation. Andrew transfers all of his stock by 25% portions of the shares in three separate and unrelated transactions to Betsy, Carolyn, and Daniel, who are not acting in concert. A taxable transfer of a controlling interest occurs when Andrew transfers 75% of the voting shares of the corporation, even though no one has subsequently acquired a controlling interest.

(E) Big Corporation has two stockholders, Adrian and Britain. Adrian owns 90 shares of stock (90%) and Britain owns 10 shares of stock (10%). Big Corporation owns 60% of the stock of Little Corporation, which owns real property. Adrian, by virtue of owning 90% of Big Corporation's stock, has a 54% interest in Little Corporation (90% interest in Big multiplied by the 60% interest Big has in Little equals the 54% interest Adrian has in Little). Adrian sells his 90 shares of stock in Big to Britain. Adrian, by selling his 90 shares of Big stock, has transferred a controlling interest (54%) in an entity that owns real property (Little). This transfer is subject to the real estate excise tax.

(F) Assume the same facts as in Example (E) of this subsection, except that Big owns only 50% of Little's stock. Since Adrian has not transferred and Britain has not acquired a controlling interest in Little ( $90\% \times 50\% = 45\%$ ), the real estate excise tax does not apply. If, however, Big had transferred its 50% interest in Little, that would be a transfer of a controlling interest and it would be subject to the real estate excise tax.

(b) The terms "**person**" or "**company**" mean any individual, receiver, administrator, executor, assignee, trustee in

bankruptcy, trust, estate, firm, copartnership, joint venture, club, company, joint stock company, business trust, municipal corporation, the state of Washington or any political subdivision thereof, corporation, limited liability company association, society, or any group of individuals acting as a unit, whether mutual, cooperative, fraternal, nonprofit, or otherwise, and the United States or any agency or instrumentality thereof.

(c) **"True and fair value"** means market value, which is the amount of money that a willing, but unobliged, buyer would pay a willing, but unobligated, owner for real property, taking into consideration all reasonable, possible uses of the property.

(d) **"Twelve-month period"** is any period of twelve consecutive months and may span two calendar years.

(e) **"Acting in concert"** occurs:

(i) When one or more persons have a relationship with each other such that one person influences or controls the actions of another through common ownership. For example, if a parent corporation and a wholly owned subsidiary each purchase a 25% interest in an entity, the two corporations have acted in concert and acquired a controlling (i.e., at least 50%) interest in the entity.

(ii) Where buyers are not commonly controlled or owned, but the unity of purpose with which they have negotiated and will complete the acquisition of ownership interests, indicates that they are acting together. For example, three separate individuals who decide together to acquire control of a company jointly through separate purchases of 20% interests in the company act in concert when they acquire the interests.

(3) **In general.** In order for the tax to apply when the controlling interest in an entity that owns real property is transferred, the following must have occurred:

(a) The transfer or acquisition of the controlling interest occurred within a twelve-month period((+)).

Effective May 1, 2010, solely for the purpose of determining whether a transfer or acquisition pursuant to the exercise of an option occurred within a twelve-month period, the date on which the option agreement was executed is deemed to be the date of the transfer or acquisition;

(b) The controlling interest was transferred in a single transaction or series of transactions by a single person or acquired by a single person or a group of persons acting in concert;

(c) The entity has an interest in real property located in this state;

(d) The transfer is not otherwise exempt under chapters 82.45 RCW and 458-61A WAC; and

(e) The transfer was made for valuable consideration.

(4) **Measure of the tax.** The measure of the tax is the

"selling price." For the purpose of this rule, "selling price" means the true and fair value of the real property owned by the entity at the time the controlling interest is transferred.

(a) If the true and fair value of the property cannot reasonably be determined, one of the following methods may be used to determine the true and fair value:

(i) A fair market value appraisal of the property; or

(ii) An allocation of assets by the seller and the buyer made pursuant to section 1060 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended or renumbered as of January 1, 2005.

(b) If the true and fair value of the property to be valued at the time of the sale cannot reasonably be determined by either of the methods in (a) of this subsection, the market value assessment for the property maintained on the county property tax rolls at the time of the sale will be used as the selling price.

(c) **Examples.**

(i) A partnership owns real property and consists of two partners, Amy and Beth. Each has a 50% partnership interest. The true and fair value of the real property owned by the partnership is \$100,000. Amy transfers her 50% interest in the partnership to Beth for valuable consideration. The taxable selling price is the true and fair value of the real property owned by the partnership, or \$100,000.

(ii) A corporation consists of two shareholders, Chris and Dilbert. The assets of the corporation include real property, tangible personal property, and other intangible assets (goodwill, cash, licenses, etc.). An appraisal of the corporation's assets determines that the values of the assets are as follows: \$250,000 for real property; \$130,000 for tangible personal property; and \$55,000 for miscellaneous intangible assets. Chris transfers his 50% interest to Ellie for valuable consideration. The taxable selling price is the true and fair value of the real property owned by the corporation, or \$250,000.

(iii) An LLC owns real property and consists of two members, Frances and George. Each has a 50% LLC interest. Frances transfers her 50% interest to George. In exchange for the transfer, George pays Frances \$100,000. The true and fair value of the real property owned by the LLC is unknown. There is no debt on the real property. A fair market value appraisal is not available. The market value assessment for the property maintained on the county property tax rolls is \$275,000. The taxable selling price is the market value assessment, or \$275,000.

(5) **Persons acting in concert.** The tax applies to acquisitions made by persons acting in concert, as defined in subsection (2)(f) of this section.

(a) Where persons are not commonly controlled or

influenced, factors that indicate whether persons are acting in concert include:

(i) A close relation in time of the transfers or acquisitions;

(ii) A small number of purchasers;

(iii) Mutual terms contained in the contracts of sale; and

(iv) Additional agreements to the sales contract that bind the purchasers to a course of action with respect to the transfer or acquisition.

(b) If the acquisitions are completely independent, with each purchaser buying without regard to the identity of the other purchasers, then the persons are not acting in concert, and the acquisitions will be considered separate acquisitions.

(c) **Example.** Able owns 100% of Emerald Corporation, which owns real property. As a group, Baker, Charlie, Delta, and Echo negotiate to acquire all of Able's interest in Emerald. Baker, Charlie, Delta, and Echo each acquire 25% of Able's interest. The contracts of Baker, Charlie, Delta, and Echo are identical and the purchases occur simultaneously. Baker, Charlie, Delta, and Echo also negotiated an agreement binding themselves to a course of action with respect to the acquisition of Emerald and the terms of the shareholders agreement that will govern their relationship as owners of Emerald. Baker, Charlie, Delta, and Echo are acting in concert and their acquisitions from Able are treated as a single acquisition of a controlling interest that is subject to the real estate excise tax.

(6) **Date of sale.**

(a) When the controlling interest is acquired in one transaction, the actual date control is transferred is the date of sale. Examples of when an interest in an entity is transferred include when payment is received by the seller and the shares of stock are delivered to the buyer, or when payment is received by the seller and partnership documents are signed, etc.

~~((However, if))~~ (b) When the parties enter into an agreement to acquire or transfer a controlling interest over time through a series of transactions, the date of sale is deemed the date of the agreement arranging the transactions. The agreement results in the transfer of both a present interest and a beneficial interest in the entity, the sum of which results in a controlling interest, regardless of whether the first of the successive transactions is more than twelve months prior to the final transaction.

~~((b))~~ (c) When the controlling interest is transferred or acquired pursuant to the exercise of an option, the date upon which the option is exercised is the date of sale.

(d) **Examples.**

(i) Andrew owns 100% of the voting shares of Topaz Corporation. Andrew signs a binding agreement to transfer 51%

of his shares in the corporation to Ted. The agreement states that the transfer will occur as follows: 49% of the shares will be transferred on January 1st, and the remaining 2% of the shares will be transferred on February 1st of the following year. Andrew has contractually agreed to sell 51% of the voting shares in Topaz within a twelve-month period, even though the shares will not actually be transferred to Ted until later. The date of sale is the date of the agreement, and REET is due upon the true and fair value of the property as of the date of the agreement.

(ii) Matt acquires a 10% interest in an entity which owns an apartment building under construction worth \$500,000 from Simon on January 30th. On July 30th Matt acquires a 30% interest in the same entity from Mary, but the building is now worth \$900,000. On September 30th Matt acquires a 10% interest in the same entity from Ruth, but the building is now worth \$1,000,000. These are three separate and completely independent transfers. The final transfer allowed Matt to acquire, within twelve months, a controlling interest in an entity that owns real property. September 30th is the date of sale.

To determine the sellers' proportional tax liability in the example above, the series of transactions is viewed as a whole. Note both the individual and the total interests transferred. Here, Simon and Mary each conveyed 10% interests, while Ruth conveyed a 30% interest, with a total of a 50% interest being conveyed. To determine the liability percentage for each seller, divide the interest each conveyed by the total interest conveyed (Here, Simon and Mary:  $10/50 = 20\%$ ; Ruth:  $30/50 = 60\%$ ). This results in tax liability percentages here for Simon and Mary of 20% each and for Ruth, 60%.

To determine the amount of tax owed, the percentage is applied to the value of the property at the time of conveyance. In the example above, the value of the property to which the percentage applies is dependent on the time of each transfer (i.e., Simon's 20% on the \$500,000; Mary's 60% on the \$900,000; Ruth's 20% on the \$1,000,000).

(7) **Tax liability.** When there is a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest in an entity that has an interest in real property, the seller of the interest is generally liable for the tax.

(a) Prior to May 1, 2010, when the seller (~~has~~) had not paid the tax by the due date and neither the buyer nor the seller (~~has~~) notified the department of the sale within thirty days of the sale, the buyer (~~is~~) was also liable for the tax. (~~to~~) When the buyer (~~has~~) notified the department of the sale within thirty days of the sale, the buyer (~~will not be~~) was not held personally liable for any tax due. Effective May 1, 2010, however, notice to the department by either the seller or the buyer does not exempt the buyer from liability for the

tax, if the department cannot collect the tax from the seller.

(b) Effective May 1, 2010, the department may, at the department's option, enforce the obligation of the seller.

(i) If the entity is a corporation;

(A) Against the corporation;

(B) Against the person or persons who acquired the controlling interest; or

(C) When the corporation is not a publicly traded company, against the person or persons who transferred the controlling interest.

(ii) If the entity is a partnership, association, trust, or other entity that is not a corporation;

(A) Against the entity; or

(B) Against the person or persons who transferred or acquired the controlling interest.

(c) Unpaid tax is a specific lien on each parcel of real property in this state owned by an entity in which a controlling interest has been transferred or acquired. The lien attaches from the time of sale until the tax is paid, which lien may be enforced in the manner prescribed for the foreclosure of mortgages.

(8) Reporting requirements.

(a) The transfer of a controlling interest in real property must be reported to the department when no instrument is recorded in the official real property records of the county in which the property is located. If the transfer is not taxable due to an exemption, that exemption should be stated on the affidavit.

~~((a))~~ (i) The sale must be reported by the seller to the department within five days from the date of the sale on the department of revenue affidavit form, DOR Form 84-0001B. The affidavit form must be signed by both the seller and the buyer, or their agent, and must be accompanied by payment of the tax due.

~~((b))~~ (ii) The affidavit form may also be used to disclose the sale, in which case:

~~((i))~~ (A) It must be signed by the person making the disclosure; and

~~((ii))~~ (B) It must be accompanied by payment of the tax due only when submitted by a seller reporting a taxable sale.

~~((c))~~ (iii) Any person who intentionally makes a false statement on any return or form required to be filed with the department under this chapter is subject to penalty of perjury.

~~((d))~~ (iv) **Examples.** The following examples, while not exhaustive, illustrate some of the circumstances in which the transfer of an interest in an entity must be reported to the department. These examples should be used only as a general guide. The status of each situation must be determined after a review of all of the facts and circumstances.

~~((i))~~ (A) Simon and Peter each own 40% of the voting shares of a corporation. Paul, Matthew, Mark, and John each own 5% voting shares. Paul acquires Peter's 40% interest, and Matthew's and Mark's 5% interests. This is a taxable acquisition because a controlling interest (50% or more) was acquired by Paul (40% from Peter plus 5% from Matthew and 5% from Mark). This transaction must be reported.

~~((ii))~~ (B) Assume same facts as in example ~~((d)(i))~~ (iv)(A) of this subsection. ~~((Paul's attorney advises him that for his protection, Paul should file an affidavit to disclose the sale.))~~ Paul files an affidavit to disclose the sale to the department within thirty days of the date of sale. Peter, Matthew, and Mark go on vacation and the affidavit and required tax payment is not sent to the department. The department notifies Peter, Matthew, and Mark of their tax liability, which now includes interest and penalties. ~~((Due to Paul's disclosure,))~~ Effective May 1, 2010, Paul is not relieved of ~~((any))~~ personal liability for the tax, interest, or penalties, if the department cannot collect from Peter, Matthew, and Mark.

~~((iii))~~ (C) Assume the same facts as in example ~~((d)(i))~~ (iv)(A) of this subsection, except Paul only acquires Peter's 40% interest and Matthew's 5% interest. This is not a taxable acquisition because a controlling interest (50% or more) was not acquired by Paul. This transaction does not need to be reported.

(b) Under RCW 43.07.390, an entity must report the transfer of a controlling interest to the secretary of state, and, effective May 1, 2010, also the granting of any option that, if exercised, would result in a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest. Failure to report a taxable transfer subjects the entity to interest and penalties.

(9) **Due date, interest and penalties.** The tax imposed is due and payable immediately on the date of sale. See WAC 458-61A-306 for interest and penalties that may apply.

(10) **Transfers after tax has been paid.** When there is a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest in an entity and the real estate excise tax is paid on the transfer, and there is a subsequent acquisition of an additional interest in the same entity within the same twelve-month period by a person acting in concert with the previous buyer(s), the subsequent seller is liable for its proportional portion of the tax. After payment by the subsequent seller of its proportional share, the person(s) who previously paid the tax may apply to the department for a refund of the amount overpaid because of the new proportional amount paid as a result of the subsequent transfer or acquisition.

(11) **Exemptions.** Because transfer and acquisition of a controlling interest in an entity that owns real estate in this state is statutorily defined as a "sale" of the real property

owned by the entity, the exemptions of chapter 82.45 RCW and this chapter also apply to the sale of a controlling interest.

**Examples.**

(a) The merger of a wholly owned subsidiary owning real property located in this state with another subsidiary wholly owned by the same parent is a transfer of a controlling interest. However, this transfer may be exempt from taxation on two grounds. First, it may be exempt because it is a mere change in form or identity (see WAC 458-61A-211). Second, it may be exempt if it qualifies under the nonrecognition of gain or loss provisions of the Internal Revenue Code for entity formation, liquidation and dissolution, and reorganization. (See WAC 458-61A-212.)

(b) Taki owns 100% of a corporation. Taki wants her child, Mieko, and corporate manager, Sage, to be co-owners with her in the corporation. Taki makes a gift of 50% of the voting stock to Mieko and sells 33 1/3% to Sage. Although a controlling interest in the corporation has been transferred to and acquired by Mieko, it is not taxed because a gift is an exempt transfer and not considered for purposes of determining whether a controlling interest has transferred. The sale of the 33 1/3% interest to Sage is not a controlling interest, and is not taxed.

(c) Richard owns 75% of the voting stock of a corporation that owns real estate located in this state. Richard pledges all of his corporate stock to secure a loan with a bank. When Richard defaults on the loan and the bank forecloses on Richard's stock in the corporation, the transfer and acquisition of the controlling interest of the entity is not a taxable transaction because foreclosures of mortgages and other security devices are exempt transfers. (See WAC 458-61A-208.)

This rule draft is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that does not require the agency to hold public hearings. Under no circumstances is this proposed rule to be used as a basis for determining tax liability or eligibility for a tax deduction, exemption, or credit.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 08-24-095, filed 12/2/08, effective 1/2/09)

**WAC 458-61A-102 Definitions.** For the purposes of chapter 458-61A WAC, the following definitions apply unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) **"Affidavit"** means the real estate excise tax affidavit provided by the department for use by taxpayers in reporting transfers of real property. Both the seller/grantor and the buyer/grantee, or their agents, sign the affidavit under penalty of perjury. The term also includes the form used to report to the department transfers and acquisitions of a controlling interest in an entity owning real property in this state under WAC 458-61A-101.

(2) **"Consideration"** means money or anything of value, either tangible or intangible, paid or delivered, or contracted to be paid or delivered, including performance of services, in return for the transfer of real property. The term includes the amount of any lien, mortgage, contract indebtedness, or other encumbrance, given to secure the purchase price, or any part thereof, or remaining unpaid on the property at the time of sale. For example, Lee purchases a home for \$250,000. He puts down \$50,000, and finances the balance of \$200,000. The full consideration paid for the house is \$250,000.

(a) "Consideration" includes the issue of an ownership interest in any entity in exchange for a transfer of real property to the entity. For example, if Julie transfers title to 20 acres of commercial property to Smith Development, LLC in exchange for a 50% ownership interest in the company, that constitutes consideration for the transfer. In the case of partnerships, consideration includes the increase in the capital account of the partner made as a result of the partner's transfer of real property to the partnership, unless the transfer is otherwise specifically exempt under WAC 458-61A-211 or 458-61A-212.

(b) "Consideration" includes the assumption of an underlying debt on the property by the buyer at the time of transfer. For example, Ben buys a residence, valued at \$300,000, from Liza. Liza was purchasing the property on a real estate contract that has an outstanding balance of \$175,000. Ben gives Liza \$125,000 in cash and he assumes the obligation on the real estate contract, which Liza assigns to him. Real estate excise tax is due on \$300,000, which is the total

consideration for the sale.

(c) "Consideration" does not include the amount of any outstanding lien or encumbrance in favor of the United States, the state, or a municipal corporation for taxes, special benefits, or improvements. For example, Mel buys residential property for \$300,000. The title is encumbered by a lien for unpaid property taxes in the amount of \$12,000, and a lien for municipal sidewalk improvements in the amount of \$6,000. Although Mel will become liable for those liens in order to take title to the property, they are not considered part of the purchase price for the purpose of calculating real estate excise tax. The real estate excise tax is due only on the purchase price of \$300,000.

(3) **"Controlling interest"** means:

(a) In the case of a corporation, either fifty percent or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of stock of the corporation entitled to vote, or fifty percent of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in the voting stock of the corporation; and

(b) In the case of a partnership, association, trust, or other entity, fifty percent or more of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in the partnership, association, trust, or other entity.

(4) **"County"** means the county treasurer or its agent.

(5) **"Date of sale"** means the date (normally shown on the instrument of conveyance or sale) that ownership of or title to real property, or control of the controlling interest in an entity that has a beneficial interest in real property, is delivered to the buyer/transferee in exchange for valuable consideration. In the case of a lease with option to purchase, the date of sale is the date when the purchase option is exercised and the property is transferred. "Date of sale," "date of transfer," "conveyance date," and "transaction date" all have the same meaning and may be used interchangeably in this chapter. The real estate excise tax is due on the date of sale.

(6) **"Department"** means the department of revenue.

(7) **"Domestic partner"** means one of two adults who are "state registered domestic partners" as defined in RCW 26.60.020.

(8) **"Floating home"** means a building on a float used in whole or in part for human habitation as a single-family dwelling, which is not designed for self-propulsion by mechanical means or for propulsion by means of wind, and which is on the property tax rolls of the county in which it is located.

(9) **"Governmental entity"** means the United States, any agency or instrumentality of the United States, the state of Washington ("state"), any government agency, commission,

college, university, or other department of the state, any political subdivision of the state, counties, any county agency, council, instrumentality, commission, office, or department, any Washington taxing district, municipal corporations of this state, and any office, council, department, or instrumentality of a Washington municipal corporation.

(10) **"Mining property"** is property containing or believed to contain metallic or nonmetallic minerals, and sold or leased under terms that require the buyer or lessee to conduct exploration or mining work thereon, and for no other purpose.

(11) **"Mobile home"** means a mobile home as defined by RCW 46.04.302.

(12) **"Mortgage"** has its ordinary meaning, and includes a "deed of trust" for the purposes of this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. The term "underlying debt" may also be used to refer to a mortgage or other security interest.

(13) **"Park model trailer"** means a park model trailer as defined in RCW 46.04.622.

(14) **"Real estate"** or **"real property"** means any interest, estate, or beneficial interest in land or anything affixed to land, including the ownership interest or beneficial interest in any entity that owns land, or anything affixed to land, including standing timber and crops. The term includes condominiums and individual apartments for which the buyer receives a warranty deed. The term includes used mobile homes, used park model trailers, used floating homes, and improvements constructed upon leased land. The term also includes any part of an irrigation system that is underground or affixed to the land. The term does not include irrigation equipment that is above the ground or that is not affixed to land. See RCW 82.12.020 for the tax treatment of sales of irrigation equipment that is not included in the definition of "real estate."

(15) **"Real estate contract"** or **"contract"** means any written agreement for the sale of real property in which legal title to the property is retained by the seller as security for the payment of the purchase price. The term does not include earnest money agreements or options to purchase real property.

(16) **"Sale"** means:

(a) Any conveyance, grant, assignment, quitclaim, or transfer of the ownership of or title to real property, including standing timber, or any estate or interest therein for a valuable consideration, and any contract for such a conveyance, grant, assignment, quitclaim, or transfer, and any lease with an option to purchase real property, including standing timber, or any estate or interest therein or other contract under which possession of the property is given to the purchaser, or any other person at the purchaser's direction, and title to the property is retained by the vendor as security for

the payment of the purchase price. The term includes the grant, relinquishment, or assignment of a life estate in property. The term also includes the grant, assignment, quitclaim, sale, or transfer of improvements constructed upon leased land.

(b) The term "sale" also includes the transfer or acquisition within any twelve-month period of a controlling interest in any entity with an interest in real property located in this state for a valuable consideration. For the purposes of this chapter, all acquisitions of persons acting in concert are aggregated for the purpose of determining whether a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest has taken place. For purposes of establishing the applicable twelve-month period for a transfer or acquisition pursuant to the exercise of an option, see WAC 458-61A-101.

(c) The term "sale" also applies to successive sales of the same property. An owner of real property is subject to payment of the real estate excise tax upon the entry of each successive contract for the sale of the same parcel of property. For example, Bob owns a house that he sells to Sam on a real estate contract. Real estate excise tax is paid on the transfer from Bob to Sam. Sam makes several payments, until he becomes unemployed. Since Sam can no longer make payments on the property, he conveys it back to Bob. Bob then makes a subsequent sale of the house to Sally. Real estate excise tax is due on the transfer from Bob to Sally. See WAC 458-61A-209 for the tax implications on the conveyance from Sam back to Bob.

(d) The term "sale" does not include:

(i) Those real property transfers that are excluded from the definition of "sale" and exempted from the real estate excise tax under RCW 82.45.010(3) and this chapter, including transfers without valuable consideration.

(ii) The transfer of lots or graves in an established cemetery. An established cemetery is one that meets the requirements for ad valorem property tax exemption under chapter 84.36 RCW.

(iii) The transfer of an interest in real property merely to secure a debt or the assignment of a security interest, release of a security interest, satisfaction of a mortgage, or reconveyance under the terms of a mortgage or deed of trust.

(iv) A deed given to a purchaser under a real estate contract upon fulfillment of the terms of the contract provided that the proper tax was paid on the original transaction. The fulfillment deed must be stamped by the county treasurer as required by WAC 458-61A-301, and the stamp must show the affidavit number of the sale for which the deed is fulfilling.

(v) A qualified sale of a manufactured/mobile home community, as defined in RCW 59.20.030, that takes place on or after June 12, 2008, but before December 31, 2018.

(e) **Examples.** The following examples, while not

exhaustive, illustrate some of the circumstances in which a transfer may or may not be taxable. These examples should be used only as a general guide. The status of each situation must be determined after a review of all of the facts and circumstances.

(i) John paid off his home mortgage and wants to get a loan to make improvements and buy a new car. John obtains an equity loan, secured by his home as collateral. This transaction is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(ii) Bob purchased real property from Sam pursuant to a real estate contract. Real estate excise tax was paid on the purchase price at the time of the sale. Bob has now paid off the property, and Sam is issuing a fulfillment deed to Bob indicating that the real estate contract has been satisfied. The fulfillment deed from Sam to Bob is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(iii) Diane has made the final payment on her mortgage, and the bank issues a full reconveyance of her property, indicating that the mortgage is paid in full. The reconveyance is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(iv) Bill is refinancing his mortgage for a lower interest rate. There is a balloon payment on the new loan that will require that he refinance again in five years. Neither transaction is subject to the real estate excise tax.

(17) **"Seller"** means any individual, receiver, assignee, trustee for a deed of trust, trustee in bankruptcy, trust, estate, firm, partnership, joint venture, club, company, joint stock company, limited liability company, business trust, municipal corporation, quasi municipal corporation, association, society, or any group of individuals acting as a unit, whether mutual, cooperative, fraternal, nonprofit or otherwise, but it does not include the United States or the state of Washington. The term "grantor" is used interchangeably with the term "seller" in this chapter and has the same meaning for purposes of the real estate excise tax.

(18) **"Selling price"** means the true and fair value of the property conveyed. There is a rebuttable presumption that the true and fair value is equal to the total consideration paid or contracted to be paid to the seller or to another person for the seller's benefit.

(a) When the price paid does not accurately reflect the true and fair value of the property, one of the following methods may be used to determine the true and fair value:

(i) A fair market appraisal of the property; or  
(ii) An allocation of assets by the seller and the buyer made under section 1060 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

(b) When the true and fair value of the property at the time of sale cannot reasonably be determined by either of the

methods in (a) of this subsection, the market value assessment for the property maintained in the county property tax rolls at the time of sale will be used as the selling price. RCW 82.45.030.

(c) When the sale is of a partial interest in real property, the principal balance of any debt remaining unpaid at the time of sale will be multiplied by the percentage of ownership transferred, and that amount added to any other consideration to determine the selling price.

(d) In the case of a lease with option to purchase, the selling price is the true and fair value of the property conveyed at the time the option is exercised.

This rule draft is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that does not require the agency to hold public hearings. Under no circumstances is this proposed rule to be used as a basis for determining tax liability or eligibility for a tax deduction, exemption, or credit.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 05-23-093, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05)

**WAC 458-61A-107 Option to purchase.** (1) **Introduction.** The real estate excise tax applies to a conveyance of real property upon the exercise of an option to purchase.

(2) **Taxability of sales of options.** The real estate excise tax does not apply to the grant or sale of an option and the real estate excise tax affidavit is not required for that transaction. However, the sale of an option is subject to business and occupation tax under the service and other category and should be reported on the combined excise tax return. RCW 82.04.290.

(3) Effective May 1, 2010, for the sole purpose of determining whether a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest pursuant to the exercise of an option occurred within a twelve-month period, the date on which the option agreement was executed is deemed to be the date of the transfer or acquisition. For any other purpose; however, the date on which the option is exercised is the date of the transfer or acquisition. RCW 82.45.010 (2)(b). See WAC 458-61A-101.

(4) **Examples.**

(a) Joe acquires an option at a cost of \$100,000. The option, if exercised, allows Joe to purchase ten parcels of land for \$700,000. As individual parcels, these lots of land are uneconomical to develop. Joe "packages" the land, making it economically feasible to develop by either obtaining sufficient acreage or required studies. Buildup, a real estate development and construction company, purchases Joe's option on the property for \$2.3 million and subsequently exercises the option, paying \$700,000 for the land. The real estate excise tax does not apply to the sale of the option, however the \$2.3 million received for the option is subject to the business and occupation tax under the service and other category. The measure of the real estate excise tax is the \$700,000 purchase price paid on the transfer of the land.

(b) Consider the same initial facts as in the example in (a) of this subsection, but instead, Joe exercises the option, and subsequently sells the land to Buildup. The real estate excise tax applies to both the transfer to Joe and the subsequent transfer from Joe to Buildup.

This rule draft is being proposed under an expedited rule-making process that does not require the agency to hold public hearings. Under no circumstances is this proposed rule to be used as a basis for determining tax liability or eligibility for a tax deduction, exemption, or credit.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 05-23-093, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05)

**WAC 458-61A-301 Payment of tax, collection responsibility, audit responsibility, and tax rulings. (1) Tax imposed.**

(a) The taxes imposed are due at the time the sale occurs and are collected by the county when the documents of sale are presented for recording or, in the case of a transfer of a controlling interest (see WAC 458-61A-101), by the department.

(b) The tax is imposed upon the seller. Effective May 1, 2010, the parent corporation of a wholly owned subsidiary is the seller, if the subsidiary sells to a third party and the subsidiary is dissolved before paying the tax.

(2) **Payment of tax. Scope of section.** This section applies to sales of real property that are evidenced by conveyance, deed, grant, assignment, quitclaim, or transfer of title to real property. See WAC 458-61A-101 for procedures pertaining to transfers or acquisitions of a controlling interest in an entity owning real property in Washington.

(3) **County as agent for state.** Real estate excise tax is paid to and collected by the agent of the county where the property is located (unless the transaction involves the transfer of a controlling interest, in which case the tax is paid to the department).

(4) **Computation of tax.** The tax is computed by multiplying the combined state and local tax rates in effect at the time of sale by the selling price. A current list of the current state and local real estate excise tax rates is available on the department's web site at dor.wa.gov. This information is also available by contacting the county where the property is located.

(5) **Evidence of payment.** The county agent stamps the instrument of sale or conveyance prior to its recording as evidence that the tax has been paid or that an exemption from the tax was claimed. In the case of a used mobile home, the real estate excise tax affidavit is stamped as evidence of payment or a claimed exemption. The stamp references the affidavit number, date, and payment of or exemption from tax, and identifies the person stamping the instrument or affidavit.

(6) **Compliance with property tax statutes.** The county agent will not stamp the instrument of conveyance or affidavit if:

(a) A continuance of use has been applied for but not

approved by the county assessor under chapter 84.33 or 84.34 RCW; or

(b) Compensating or additional tax is due but has not been paid as required by RCW 84.33.086, 84.33.140 (5)(c), 84.34.108 (1)(c), 84.36.812, or 84.26.080.

(7) **Prerequisites to recording.** The county auditor will not file or record the instrument of conveyance until all taxes due under this section have been paid or the transfer is determined to be exempt from tax as indicated by a stamped document.

(8) **Evidence of lien satisfaction.** A receipt issued by the county agent for payment of the tax may be used as evidence of satisfaction of a lien imposed under RCW 82.45.070.

(9) **Audit authority.** All transactions are subject to audit by the department. The department will audit transactions to confirm the proper amount of tax was paid and that any claim for exemption is valid. Failure to provide documentation to the department as requested may result in denial of any exemptions claimed and the assessment of additional tax.

(10) **Tax assessments.**

(a) If the department discovers an underpayment of tax due, it will notify the taxpayer and assess the additional tax due, together with all applicable interest and penalties. The assessment notice will identify the additional tax due and explain the reason for the assessment.

(b) Persons receiving an assessment must respond within thirty days from the date the assessment was mailed. Failure to respond may result in the assessment of additional penalties and interest and enforcement for collection of the deficient tax under the administrative provisions of chapters 82.32 and 82.45 RCW.

(11) **Tax rulings.** Any person may request a written opinion from the department regarding their real estate excise tax liability pertaining to a proposed transfer of real property or a proposed transfer or acquisition of the controlling interest in an entity with an interest in real property. The request should include sufficient facts about the transaction to enable the department to ascertain the proper tax liability. The department will advise the taxpayer in writing of its opinion. The opinion is binding upon both the taxpayer and the department under the facts presented in accordance with WAC 458-20-100(9), appeals, small claims and settlements. To obtain a written opinion, send your request to:

Department of Revenue  
Taxpayer Information & Education  
P.O. Box 47478  
Olympia, WA 98504-7478

You may also use the "contact" information available online at dor.wa.gov.

(12) **Refunds.**

(a) **Introduction.** Under certain circumstances, taxpayers (or their authorized representatives) may request a refund of real estate excise tax paid. The request must be filed within four years of the date of sale, and must be accompanied by supporting documents.

(b) **Claims for refunds.** Any person having paid the real estate excise tax in error may apply for a refund of the amount overpaid by submitting a completed refund request form.

(c) **Forms and documentation.** Refund request forms are available from the department or the county. The completed form along with supporting documentation is submitted to the county office where the tax was originally paid. If the tax was originally paid directly to the department, the claim form and supporting documentation are submitted to:

Department of Revenue  
Miscellaneous Tax Section  
P.O. Box 47477  
Olympia, WA 98504-7477

(d) **Circumstances under which refunds are authorized.** The authority to issue a refund under this chapter is limited to the following circumstances:

(i) Real estate excise tax was paid on the conveyance back to the seller in a transaction that is completely rescinded (as defined in WAC 458-61A-209);

(ii) Real estate excise tax was paid on the conveyance back to the seller on a sale rescinded by court order. The county treasurer must attach a copy of the court decision to the department's affidavit copy (see also WAC 458-61A-208, Deeds in lieu of foreclosure);

(iii) Real estate excise tax was paid on the initial conveyance recorded in error by an escrow agent before the closing date, provided that the property is conveyed back to the seller;

(iv) Real estate excise tax was paid on the conveyance back to the seller in accordance with (d)(iii) of this subsection;

(v) Real estate excise tax was paid on the initial conveyance recorded before a purchaser assumes an outstanding loan that represents the only consideration paid for the property, provided:

(A) The purchaser is unable to assume the loan; and

(B) The property is conveyed back to the seller. The refund is allowed because there is a failure of the consideration;

(vi) The conveyance back to the seller in (d)(v) of this

subsection;

(vii) Double payment of the tax;

(viii) Overpayment of the tax through error of computation;

or

(ix) Real estate excise tax paid when the taxpayer was entitled to claim a valid exemption from the tax but failed to do so at the time of transfer.

(e) **Responsibilities of county.**

(i) **Request for refund made prior to disposition of proceeds.** If the taxpayer submits a valid refund request to the county before the county treasurer has remitted the tax to the state treasurer, the county may void the receipted affidavit copies and issue the refund directly. The county will then submit a copy of the initial affidavit, together with a copy of the refund request, to the department. If, after reviewing the request for refund and supporting documentation, the county is unable to determine the validity of the request, the county will send the request, a copy of the affidavit, and all supporting documentation to the department for determination. If the county denies the request for refund, in whole or in part, the taxpayer may appeal in writing to the department's miscellaneous tax section within thirty days of the county's denial.

(ii) **Request for refund made after disposition of proceeds.** If the taxpayer submits the refund request after the county treasurer has remitted the tax to the state treasurer, the county will verify the information in the request and forward it to the department with a copy of the affidavit and any other supporting documents provided by the taxpayer. The county or the department may request additional documentation to determine whether the taxpayer qualifies for a refund.