

Printing Industries of California

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Currency Reproduction: U.S. And Foreign Obligations

Our office frequently receives inquiries about the current guidelines on the reproduction of U.S. currency and other U.S. Treasury Obligations. We have outlined these guidelines below. They appear in detail in Title 18 of the U.S. Code, Sections 475 and 504.

U.S. And Foreign Currency Reproductions

Before 1984, the law forbade the use of currency reproduction in commercial advertisements (whether photographic or other likeness). Reproduction was permitted only for philatelic, numismatic, educational, or news purposes. In 1984, however, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Regan V. Times, Inc.* that the section of law forbidding reproduction of U.S. or foreign currency was an unconstitutional restriction of free speech. The *Regan V. Times, Inc.* decision prompted the Department of Treasury to permit the reproduction of U.S. and foreign currency for any purpose if the reproduction met certain requirements.

The Counterfeit Deterrence Act of 1992 granted authority to the Secret Service (through the Department of Treasury) to permit color illustrations of U.S. currency-subject to rulemaking by the Secret Service. The final rules were issued May 31, 1996 (*Federal Register*: May 31, 1996 (Volume 61 No.106, pp.27280-27281), which amended Title 3, Chapter IV of the Code of Federal Regulations, by adding Part 411 to permit color illustrations of U.S. currency [as authorized by 18 USC, Section 504 and Treasury Directive *No.15-56*, 58FR48539 (9/16/93)].

The guidelines on currency reproduction now permit the printing, publishing, and importation, and the making or importation of the necessary plates or items for such printing or publishing, of color illustrations of U.S. currency provided that all of the following criteria are met:

1. The currency reproduction is more than 1½ the size or less than ¾ the size, in linear dimension, of the currency or any part of the currency.
2. The illustration must be one-sided.
3. All negatives, plates, positives, digitized storage medium, graphic files, magnetic medium, and optical storage that contain an image of the illustration shall be destroyed and/or deleted or erased after their final use.

In addition, law (18 USC 475) prohibits the printing of business cards containing images of obligations or securities of the United States unless the above listed restrictions are met. Furthermore, law prohibits the stamping of advertisements onto genuine obligations.

United States Treasury Checks and Bonds

Law (18 USC 475) permits photographic or likeness of U. S. Treasury checks and bonds for any purpose provided the items meet the three tests for currency reproduction: (a) less than 3/4 or greater than 1 1/2 times the size; (b) printed on only one side; and (c) the negatives, plates, etc. used in making the likeness are destroyed after their final use.

Coin Reproductions

Law (18 USC 504) allows for the reproduction of coins as follows:

1. Illustrations and flat images—coins may be reproduced in any size or color.
2. Genuine (raised images—coins may be reproduced if the reproduction is (a) more than twice the diameter of a silver dollar, or (b) less than half the diameter of a dime.
3. Other requirements—such reproduction, moreover, must conform to the provisions of the Hobby Protection Act and must be marked "COPY" in the prescribed manner.

Stamps (Postage, Postage Meter, Revenue, Migratory Bird Hunting)

Law (18 USC 504) sets the following guidelines for the reproduction of stamps:

1. Canceled stamp—full color, actual size reproductions.
2. Uncanceled stamps—full color, replicated or enlarged reproductions (less than 3/4 or greater than 1 1/2 times in size).
3. Uncanceled stamps—no restrictions on black and white reproductions.

Other Common Uses

We are frequently asked about reproduction guidelines when (a) the currency or other obligation is distorted, (b) a portion of the note is used, or (c) another portrait or alternative language is substituted in place of the original.

Each of these modifications are allowed, but only when the three tests mentioned in the section (above) on "U.S. and Foreign Currency Reproductions" are met.