



Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) Agency Background Document

Agency name	Department of Taxation
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) citation	23 VAC 10-210-940
Regulation title	Chapter 210-Retail Sales and Use Tax
Action title	Medicines, drugs, eyeglasses and related items
Date this document prepared	October 16, 2006

This information is required for executive branch review and the Virginia Registrar of Regulations, pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (APA), Executive Orders 21 (2002) and 58 (1999), and the *Virginia Register Form, Style, and Procedure Manual*.

Purpose

Please describe the subject matter and intent of the planned regulatory action. Also include a brief explanation of the need for and the goals of the new or amended regulation.

Virginia Administrative Code Cite	Virginia Code Cite	Chapter	Proposed change and rationale
23VAC10-210-940	§ 58.1-609.10(9)	Chapters 331, 361 (2006)	Clarify the sales tax application to health care purchases, including prescription and nonprescription drugs, proprietary medicines, controlled drugs, and medical supplies and devices.

Legislation enacted by the 2006 General Assembly (Chapters 331, 361, 2006 Acts of Assembly) changed the application of the retail sales and use tax for a veterinarian's purchase of medicines and drugs. Prior to this legislative change, a veterinarian was deemed the user and consumer of any medicine or drug used in his or her operation, and was required to pay the retail sales and use tax to his or her suppliers for these items.

The 2006 General Assembly amended this statute by exempting a veterinarian's purchase of medicines and drugs that are used by vets in treating agricultural production animals, and medicines and drugs that are sold to farmers for direct use in producing an agricultural product for market. In its current form, the regulation does not reflect this change in departmental policy, as it contains language that indicates that licensed physicians do not include veterinarians.

The General Assembly also enacted law this year (Chapter 217, 2006 Acts of Assembly) that expanded the exemption available for the purchase of medicines and drugs to those purchased by for-profit nursing homes, clinics, and similar corporations. The regulation must be revised to reflect this legislative change.

The regulation also requires clarification concerning items that are not specifically identified in the statute, or regulation, but because they are used in the practice of medicine, must be defined to determine whether they qualify under one of the specifically identified categories of exempt medicines or drugs, eyeglasses, exempt durable medical equipment, or wheelchairs and other medical devices.

This regulatory action is necessary to ensure a predictable and adequate revenue stream for the government to provide for the health, safety and welfare of its citizens.

Legal basis

Please identify the state and/or federal legal authority to promulgate this proposed regulation, including (1) the most relevant law and/or regulation, including Code of Virginia citation and General Assembly chapter number(s), if applicable, and (2) promulgating entity, i.e., agency, board, or person. Describe the legal authority and the extent to which the authority is mandatory or discretionary.

Code of Virginia § 58.1-203 provides that the “Tax Commissioner shall have the power to issue regulations relating to the interpretation and enforcement of the laws of this Commonwealth governing taxes administered by the Department.” The authority for the current regulatory action is discretionary.

Need

Please detail the specific reasons why the agency has determined that the proposed regulatory action is essential to protect the health, safety, or welfare of citizens. In addition, delineate any potential issues that may need to be addressed as the regulation is developed.

Government must have predictable and adequate revenue to provide for the health, safety and welfare of its citizens. Tax regulations enhance customer service and voluntary compliance. The interpretations, examples, and other guidance in tax regulations ensure uniform application of the tax laws to taxpayers. Business taxpayers in particular find regulations essential in predicting then tax consequences of transactions and avoiding unanticipated tax assessments as the result of audits. Tax regulations also ensure that audits and other compliance activity cause the assessment and collection of the correct amount of tax.

Substance

Please detail any changes that will be proposed. For new regulations, include a summary of the proposed regulatory action. Where provisions of an existing regulation are being amended, explain how the existing regulation will be changed.

In its current form, the regulation at issue provides processes and procedures for the tax application of medicines, drugs, durable medical equipment, eyeglasses, wheelchairs, and similar medical devices and supplies. This regulatory action will amend the regulation to reflect 2006 legislative changes concerning

medicines purchased by for-profit nursing homes and medicines purchased by veterinarians for use in the treatment of agricultural production animals. In addition, the amendment will provide clarification on the tax application of certain items such as silicone implants, dialysis equipment, and other orthopedic devices.

Alternatives

Please describe all viable alternatives to the proposed regulatory action that have been or will be considered to meet the essential purpose of the action. Also, please describe the process by which the agency has considered or will consider other alternatives for achieving the need in the most cost-effective manner.

The Department considered alternatives to the proposed regulatory action. Doing nothing would leave the regulation inconsistent with the statute. Repealing the regulation would reduce the level of customer service and, as a result, tend to reduce the level of voluntary compliance with the tax laws. Audit and compliance activity would produce less uniform results and would be much less effective in enforcing the tax laws.

Since 1980, administrative interpretations of the tax laws that are not in the form of published rulings or a regulation have not been admissible as evidence in court. Code of Virginia § 58.1-205. Even published “rulings and policies themselves are not entitled to great weight, unless expressed in regulations.” Chesapeake Hospital Authority v. Commonwealth, 262 Va. 551, 554 S.E.2d 55 (2001). Therefore, to ensure enforcement, it is necessary to promulgate regulations containing the Tax Commissioner’s interpretations of the tax laws.

Public participation

Please indicate the agency is seeking comments on the intended regulatory action, to include ideas to assist the agency in the development of the proposal and the costs and benefits of the alternatives stated in this notice or other alternatives. Also, indicate whether a public hearing is to be held to receive comments on this notice.

TAX is seeking comments on the intended regulatory action, including but not limited to 1) ideas to assist in the development of a proposal, 2) the costs and benefits of the alternatives stated in this background document or other alternatives and 3) potential impacts of the regulation. TAX is also seeking information on impacts on small businesses as defined in § 2.2-4007.1 of the Code of Virginia. Information may include 1) projected reporting, recordkeeping and other administrative costs, 2) probable effect of the regulation on affected small businesses, and 3) description of less intrusive or costly alternative methods of achieving the purpose of the regulation.

Anyone wishing to submit written comments may do so at the public hearing or on the Town Hall Public Comment Forum for this action or by email to the agency contact person listed on the Town Hall for this regulatory action. In order to be considered comments must be received by the last day of the public comment period.

A public hearing will be held and notice of the hearing may be found on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website (www.townhall.virginia.gov) and can be found in the Calendar of Events section of the Virginia Register of Regulations. Both oral and written comments may be submitted at that time.

Participatory approach

Please indicate, to the extent known, if advisers (e.g., ad hoc advisory committees, technical advisory committees) will be involved in the development of the proposed regulation. Indicate that 1) the agency is not using the participatory approach in the development of the proposal because the agency has authorized proceeding without using the participatory approach; 2) the agency is using the participatory approach in the development of the proposal; or 3) the agency is inviting comment on whether to use the participatory approach to assist the agency in the development of a proposal.

TAX is using the participatory approach to develop the proposal. TAX will form a technical advisory committee to consist of interested parties to assist in the development of the proposed regulation. Persons interested in participating on the advisory committee should contact the agency contact person listed for this regulatory action on the Town Hall prior to the end of the public comment period.

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Family impact

Assess the potential impact of the proposed regulatory action on the institution of the family and family stability including to what extent the regulatory action will: 1) strengthen or erode the authority and rights of parents in the education, nurturing, and supervision of their children; 2) encourage or discourage economic self-sufficiency, self-pride, and the assumption of responsibility for oneself, one's spouse, and one's children and/or elderly parents; 3) strengthen or erode the marital commitment; and 4) increase or decrease disposable family income.

This regulatory action is not expected to have an impact on family formation, stability and autonomy.