

SEC. 46. REPEALS.—All laws or parts of laws, insofar as they relate to business affected hereby, and are in conflict with any of the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed.

Repeals.

SEC. 47. CONSTITUTIONALITY.—Should any section or provision of this Act be held unconstitutional or invalid, the validity of the Act as a whole, or of any part thereof, other than the part decided to be unconstitutional or invalid, shall not be affected.

Constitutionality.

SEC. 48. EFFECTIVE DATE OF ACT.—Except where otherwise specifically provided herein, this Act shall become effective thirty days after approval.

Effective date of Act.

Approved, October 9, 1940.

[CHAPTER 793]

AN ACT

To amend section 355 of the Revised Statutes, as amended, to authorize the Attorney General to approve the title to low-value lands and interests in lands acquired by or on behalf of the United States subject to infirmities, and for other purposes.

October 9, 1940

[H. R. 9736]

[Public, No. 825]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 355 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, as amended, is hereby amended to read as follows:

R. S. § 355, amend-

ment.

34 U. S. C. § 520.

Ante, p. 19.

“SEC. 355. No public money shall be expended upon any site or land purchased by the United States for the purposes of erecting thereon any armory, arsenal, fort, fortification, navy yard, custom-house, lighthouse, or other public building of any kind whatever, until the written opinion of the Attorney General shall be had in favor of the validity of the title.

Lands, etc., purchased by U. S. for public buildings.
Validity of title to requirements.

“Notwithstanding the provisions of this or any other law, whenever the average value of any lands or interests in land to be acquired by or on behalf of the United States under a single option or contract of sale does not exceed \$10 per acre (hereinafter referred to as ‘low-value lands’), the title may be accepted subject to such infirmities as, in the opinion of the Attorney General, may, without jeopardizing the interests of the United States, be left for removal by condemnation or other appropriate proceedings, if and when necessary: *Provided*, That the total value of any lands or interests to be acquired under a single option or contract of sale subject to an infirmity does not exceed \$3,500. No public money shall hereafter be expended for the acquisition of such low-value lands or interests in land by or on behalf of the United States for any purpose until the written opinion of the Attorney General has been had approving the title subject, if expedient, to infirmities as herein provided. However, no money in excess of \$2,500 shall be expended for the construction of buildings, works, or other improvements (except roads, trails, and fire-protection improvements) on any site, tract, or parcel of land the title to which is subject to infirmities, until the written opinion of the Attorney General in favor of the validity of the title has been had as in the case of other lands. For the purpose of this Act, values of lands and interests in land shall be determined by the consideration paid or to be paid.

“Low-value lands.”
Acceptance of title subject to infirmities.

Proviso.
Limitations.

“The Attorney General is hereby authorized to approve the title to easements or rights-of-way to be acquired by or on behalf of the United States, subject to such infirmities as, in his opinion, will not jeopardize the interests of the United States.

Easements or rights-of-way.

“Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the authority now or hereafter delegated to any officer in exercising the power of eminent domain for or on behalf of the United States, to take title to or possession of or to expend money for or upon any land or interest in land,

Eminent domain.
Authority of officer to take title, etc.

or to expend money as security for an ultimate award in advance of final judgment in any proceedings to determine just compensation; nor shall this Act be construed to preclude any acquiring agency from expending money for the erection of any preliminary and temporary structure upon any land.

Procurement of evidence of title.

“The head or other authorized officer of any department, independent establishment, or agency, shall procure any evidence of title which the Attorney General may deem necessary, and the expenses of procurement, except where otherwise authorized by law or provided by contract, may be paid out of the appropriations for the acquisition of land or out of the appropriations made for the contingencies of the acquiring department, independent establishment, or agency.

Basis of opinion as to title.

“The Attorney General may, in his discretion, base any opinion as to title required either by this Act or any other law upon either or both of the following: Certificates of title of title companies or such evidence of title as he may deem satisfactory.

Provisions of designated laws not affected.

“The foregoing provisions of this section shall not be construed to affect in any manner any existing provisions of law which are applicable to the acquisition of lands or interests in land by the Tennessee Valley Authority; and nothing in this section shall be construed to affect in any manner any authority which the Secretary of War, the Chief of Engineers, or the Secretary of the Interior have under the provisions of law in force on the date this section as amended takes effect with respect to the approval by them of title to land or interests in land acquired by the War Department or the Department of the Interior, as the case may be. Nor shall the foregoing provisions of this section, or the provisions of any other law, be construed to require any opinion of the Attorney General in connection with the acquisition or improvement of easements and rights-of-way for military or naval purposes; or for the acquisition or improvement of easements and rights-of-way by the Department of Agriculture for forest and other conservation purposes where the cost of any such easement of right-of-way acquired under a single instrument of conveyance and the cost of any improvement thereon does not exceed \$2,500; and the Attorney General may, in his discretion, waive the requirement for his opinion in connection with the acquisition or improvement of easements and rights-of-way for other purposes when, in his opinion, such waiver will not jeopardize the interests of the United States.

Easements, etc., for military or naval purposes.

Waiver of requirement for opinion.

Jurisdiction over lands.

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the obtaining of exclusive jurisdiction in the United States over lands or interests therein which have been or shall hereafter be acquired by it shall not be required; but the head or other authorized officer of any department or independent establishment or agency of the Government may, in such cases and at such times as he may deem desirable, accept or secure from the State in which any lands or interests therein under his immediate jurisdiction, custody, or control are situated, consent to or cession of such jurisdiction, exclusive or partial, not theretofore obtained, over any such lands or interests as he may deem desirable and indicate acceptance of such jurisdiction on behalf of the United States by filing a notice of such acceptance with the Governor of such State or in such other manner as may be prescribed by the laws of the State where such lands are situated. Unless and until the United States has accepted jurisdiction over lands hereafter to be acquired as aforesaid, it shall be conclusively presumed that no such jurisdiction has been accepted.”

Acceptance.

Approved, October 9, 1940.