

§ 72.44

consular officer, therefore, must satisfy himself that the evidence which he accepts is sufficient to relieve him as provisional conservator. Friends, traveling companions, employers, and business associates are not competent to relieve the consular officer of the duties and responsibilities enumerated in the regulations in this part, unless duly authorized as legal representatives of the estate (see § 72.18). Satisfactory evidence of a claimant's right to the personal estate of a decedent may be supplied in the manner indicated in § 72.44.

§ 72.44 Evidence of claimant's right to estate.

(a) *Letters testamentary.* A certified copy of the letters testamentary (an instrument issued by a court of law under which a person, named as executor by a will, formally takes charge of the estate and proceeds to carry out the directions in the will) is prima-facie evidence of the executor's right to take possession of the personal estate.

(b) *Letters of administration.* A certified copy of the letters of administration (an instrument issued by a court of law in intestate proceedings appointing an administrator to take charge of the property of a decedent) is prima-facie evidence of the administrator's right to take possession of the personal estate.

(c) *Affidavit of next of kin.* When a decedent dies intestate, and the personal estate consists only of clothing and similar personal effects appraised at little or no commercial value, or in cases where the consular officer is fully satisfied of the legal right of the claimant and the value of the estate does not warrant the expense of probate proceedings, he may be justified in considering as satisfactory evidence an affidavit executed by the decedent's next of kin. The affidavit of the next of kin should be corroborated by the sworn statements of two persons acquainted with the affiant and familiar with the facts of the case. In any event, the consular officer must satisfy himself of the legal right of the claimant or claimants to the decedent's effects before releasing the property that he has in his possession, and he must decide whether

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an affidavit is acceptable in lieu of a certified copy of the letters testamentary or the letters of administration.

§ 72.45 Shipment of personal estate to the United States.

(a) When the consular officer is requested to ship to the United States the personal estate in his possession, he should deliver it to a forwarding company selected by the legal representative. Clearance by Customs in the United States will be facilitated if the personal estate is accompanied by a consular certificate identifying it and indicating its nature. If the entire shipment is covered by a single bill of lading, a certificate attached to the original bill of lading covering the shipment would be sufficient; otherwise a certificate should accompany each parcel, box or case.

(b) Extra copies of the bill of lading can serve as a receipt from the forwarding company, one copy to be attached to the consular officer's final statement of account (§ 72.50), and one copy to be retained in the office files. If shipment by registered or insured parcel post, or by other safe means covered by receipt, is possible, there is no objection to forwarding the estate in this fashion, and postal or other receipts should be disposed of in the manner described above, with the original attached to the final statement of account. The personal effects of Foreign Service personnel (see § 72.27) and of personnel of other Government agencies (except Department of Defense and Coast Guard personnel) should be consigned to the United States despatch agent at the port of entry, for forwarding to the legal representative.

§ 72.46 Consular action on disagreements between claimants.

If rival claimants or administrators (administrators may be appointed in different jurisdictions) demand the personal estate in the consular officer's possession, he should refuse to deliver the estate until an agreement has been reached, or judgment rendered, as to which claimant or administrator should receive it, and the consular officer so informed in writing. If, after one year, agreement has not been reached