

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADMIRALTY AND MARITIME LAW AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN THE FIFTH AND ELEVENTH CIRCUITS

David W. Robertson
W. Page Keeton Chair in Tort Law
University Distinguished Teaching Professor
University of Texas
727 East Dean Keeton Street, Austin, Texas 78705
512/232-1339; Fax 512/858-1045
drobotson@mail.law.utexas.edu

Michael F. Sturley
Fannie Coplin Regents Chair in Law
University of Texas
727 East Dean Keeton Street, Austin, Texas 78705
512/232-1350; Fax 512/471-6988
msturley@mail.law.utexas.edu

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Fannie Coplin Regents Chair in Law
University of Texas
727 East Dean Keeton Street, Austin, Texas 78705
512/232-1350; Fax 512/471-6988
msturley@law.utexas.edu

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is the tenth paper in a series of annual reports on U.S. admiralty and maritime law and practice.¹ In these papers we try to call attention to the principal

¹ The preceding nine papers are David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 34 TUL. MAR. L.J. 443 (2010) [hereinafter *2009 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 33 TUL. MAR. L.J. 381 (2009) [hereinafter *2008 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 32 TUL. MAR. L.J. 493 (2008) [hereinafter *2007 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 31 TUL. MAR. L.J. 463 (2007) [hereinafter *2006 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 30 TUL. MAR. L.J. 195 (2006) [hereinafter *2005 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 29 TUL. MAR. L.J. 369 (2005) [hereinafter *2004 Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and*

national-level developments that bear on the work of admiralty judges, lawyers, and scholars, and we look more closely at the relevant work of the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits. We do not warrant full coverage, although with respect to the Fifth and Eleventh Circuit Courts of Appeals, we try to be fairly thorough.²

II. MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A. *December 1, 2010, Changes to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP)*

The Supreme Court has sent a package of procedural-rule amendments³ to Congress that will take effect on December 1, 2010, unless Congress rejects or defers them. The changes to the FRCP affect Rules 8, 26, and 56. Rule 8(c) is amended to delete “discharge in bankruptcy” from the list of affirmative defenses that must be affirmatively pleaded. The alterations to Rule 26 deal with discovery of expert evidence. According to *U.S. Law Week*, the “amendments to Rule 56 are intended to improve

in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits, 16 U.S.F. MAR. L.J. 147 (2004) [hereinafter 2003 *Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 27 TUL. MAR. L.J. 495 (2003) [hereinafter 2002 *Recent Developments*]; David W. Robertson & Michael F. Sturley, *Recent Developments in Admiralty and Maritime Law at the National Level and in the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits*, 26 TUL. MAR. L.J. 193 (2001) [hereinafter 2001 *Recent Developments*].

² We include selected district court decisions for their information value. But remember that “[a] decision by a federal district judge is not binding precedent in either a different judicial district, the same judicial district, or even upon the same judge in a different case.” 18 MOORE’S FEDERAL PRACTICE § 134.02[1][d], p. 138-24.1 (3d ed. 2007).

³ In addition to the changes to the FRCP, the package also includes minor amendments to the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure as well as changes to the criminal procedure, bankruptcy, and evidence rules.

procedures for presenting and deciding motions for summary judgment. The changes do not affect the standard for granting summary judgment.”⁴

B. *Inland Navigation Rules Moved from U.S. Code to CFR*

In 1981, the former Western Rivers Rules and Great Lakes Rules were subsumed by the Inland Rules, which apply on all U.S. waters not governed by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGS). For many years the Inland Rules were codified at 33 U.S.C. §§ 2001-38. In 2004, Congress repealed the codified rules as of the effective date of final regulations to be prescribed by the Coast Guard. 33 U.S.C. § 2071 provides that the new inland rules are to be “as consistent as possible” with COLREGS.

On April 15, 2010, the Coast Guard issued a final rule (to take effect on May 17) placing the Inland Rules in the Code of Federal Regulations at 33 CFR Part 83. Evidently no substantive changes to the Inland Rules have been made.

C. *Ongoing Concerns re Twombly and Iqbal*

Last year’s paper⁵ addressed concerns that the Supreme Court’s nonmaritime decisions in *Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*⁶ and *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*⁷ may have disrupted federal-court motion practice by creating a new “plausibility” standard for federal civil complaints. The hubbub continues. During the past year the Judiciary Committees of both Houses of Congress held hearings on the matter, and various pieces of legislation

⁴ 78 U.S.L.W. 2670 (May 11, 2010).

⁵ 2009 *Recent Developments*, supra note 1, at 451-52.

⁶ 550 U.S. 544 (2007).

⁷ 129 S.Ct. 1937 (2009).