# Louisiana Property Law

# Louisiana Property Law

### The Civil Code, Cases, and Commentary

#### SECOND EDITION

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## Preface

Property law covers competing claims regarding access to resources, the use and control of resources, the transfer of resources, and it also mediates change in access to, use and control of resources over time. Although a course in property law necessarily covers some dry and abstract technicalities—property titles, boundary markers, classifications of different kinds of things and the like, property law remains one of the most interesting introductory subjects in law school. Our initial goal in this casebook is to share our excitement about that subject. We aim to show you the stakes in a property dispute and help you identify the important societal and economic interests at play in property law. We also strive to reveal that property rules, principles and practices reflect distinct local conditions and cultures.

Because this casebook focuses on property law specific to Louisiana, however, we want to help you appreciate that Louisiana's system of property law is a core part of this state's civilian legal heritage inherited from its days as a French and Spanish colony. As many commentators have observed over the years, property law is one of the principal areas where Louisiana's civil law tradition has been most carefully preserved in the Louisiana Civil Code. It is also an area where important substantive differences between Louisiana civil law and the common law of its sister states still prevail. This book thus opens with an introduction to the history and nature of the civil law tradition and the sources of Louisiana property law. Throughout the rest of book, we refer to historical contexts for current Louisiana law. We also point out, where relevant, how Louisiana property law is different from or similar to property law in common law states and foreign jurisdictions.

A third goal of this casebook is to introduce you to hotly contested areas of property law, including debates about how property law actually functions and how its fundamental purposes and core values affect principles and practice. Understanding these controversies within property law will enrich your understanding of codal provisions, judicial opinions and statutes that form the substantive base of Louisiana property law today.

A final goal of this casebook is to demystify property law so that you can become a proficient property law practitioner. Lawyers who work on property law matters must become efficient problem-solvers. They must be able to develop arguments that are likely to persuade judges and assist clients. Acquiring a firm grasp of basic property law principles is therefore an essential first step to becoming a proficient, practice-ready lawyer who can assist individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and government institutions in a myriad of transactions and disputes. Property involves actual persons and significant stakes. The contestants include people, corporations, towns, cities, and even the State of Louisiana. Property law decides who has access to things, who can use things, who can exclude or be excluded from things, who can sell, lease or donate things, what terms and limits govern such transfers, and how and when our relationship to things can change over time. In the pages that follow we endeavor to help you sort Louisiana property law into its basic elements and understand its vocabulary, its codal structure and the modes of civilian legal thinking essential to helping actual people—your future clients and constituents—flourish as individuals, as families or in other kinds of associations.

Even if you do not intend to become a Louisiana lawyer, this casebook should still be enlightening. It explores how a mixed jurisdiction like Louisiana has embraced its civilian legal heritage in one important area of private law, nurtured and modified that heritage over the course of two centuries and struggled to make that heritage serviceable in the twenty-first century. We are proud of the many unique contributions made by property law to Louisiana's legal culture. At the same time, we invite you to join us in probing its values, challenging its assumptions, and evaluating the ways it has adapted to fit the diverse needs of modern society.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge Dean Madeleine M. Landrieu of Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, Professor Dr. Roland Wittmann of the European University Viadrina and Professor Marc Roark of Southern University Law Center for their support in helping us prepare the second edition of this book. We are also grateful to the diligent students in our property classes over the last five years who have asked hard questions and helped us see where improvement was needed. Finally, we give special thanks to research assistants Jerald Andry, Sarah Didlake, Philip Laborde, Sara LaRosa, Gabriel Silva and Andre Stolier, who all made valuable contributions to this edition. We hope that our book will not only offer a helpful resource to learners and practitioners alike, but also bring joy to those interested in the scientific aspect of the study of law. *Sis felix!* 

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