

“(1) For more than 40 years the Federal Tort Claims Act [see Short Title note above] has been the legal mechanism for compensating persons injured by negligent or wrongful acts of Federal employees committed within the scope of their employment.

“(2) The United States, through the Federal Tort Claims Act, is responsible to injured persons for the common law torts of its employees in the same manner in which the common law historically has recognized the responsibility of an employer for torts committed by its employees within the scope of their employment.

“(3) Because Federal employees for many years have been protected from personal common law tort liability by a broad based immunity, the Federal Tort Claims Act has served as the sole means for compensating persons injured by the tortious conduct of Federal employees.

“(4) Recent judicial decisions, and particularly the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Westfall v. Erwin*, have seriously eroded the common law tort immunity previously available to Federal employees.

“(5) This erosion of immunity of Federal employees from common law tort liability has created an immediate crisis involving the prospect of personal liability and the threat of protracted personal tort litigation for the entire Federal workforce.

“(6) The prospect of such liability will seriously undermine the morale and well being of Federal employees, impede the ability of agencies to carry out their missions, and diminish the vitality of the Federal Tort Claims Act as the proper remedy for Federal employee torts.

“(7) In its opinion in *Westfall v. Erwin*, the Supreme Court indicated that the Congress is in the best position to determine the extent to which Federal employees should be personally liable for common law torts, and that legislative consideration of this matter would be useful.

“(b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act [see Short Title of 1988 Amendment note under section 1 of this title] to protect Federal employees from personal liability for common law torts committed within the scope of their employment, while providing persons injured by the common law torts of Federal employees with an appropriate remedy against the United States.”

§ 2672. Administrative adjustment of claims

The head of each Federal agency or his designee, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Attorney General, may consider, ascertain, adjust, determine, compromise, and settle any claim for money damages against the United States for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of any employee of the agency while acting within the scope of his office or employment, under circumstances where the United States, if a private person, would be liable to the claimant in accordance with the law of the place where the act or omission occurred: *Provided*, That any award, compromise, or settlement in excess of \$25,000 shall be effected only with the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his designee. Notwithstanding the proviso contained in the preceding sentence, any award, compromise, or settlement may be effected without the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his or her designee, to the extent that the Attorney General delegates to the head of the agency the authority to make such award, compromise, or settlement. Such delegations may not exceed the authority delegated by the Attorney General

to the United States attorneys to settle claims for money damages against the United States. Each Federal agency may use arbitration, or other alternative means of dispute resolution under the provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 5 of title 5, to settle any tort claim against the United States, to the extent of the agency's authority to award, compromise, or settle such claim without the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his or her designee.

Subject to the provisions of this title relating to civil actions on tort claims against the United States, any such award, compromise, settlement, or determination shall be final and conclusive on all officers of the Government, except when procured by means of fraud.

Any award, compromise, or settlement in an amount of \$2,500 or less made pursuant to this section shall be paid by the head of the Federal agency concerned out of appropriations available to that agency. Payment of any award, compromise, or settlement in an amount in excess of \$2,500 made pursuant to this section or made by the Attorney General in any amount pursuant to section 2677 of this title shall be paid in a manner similar to judgments and compromises in like causes and appropriations or funds available for the payment of such judgments and compromises are hereby made available for the payment of awards, compromises, or settlements under this chapter.

The acceptance by the claimant of any such award, compromise, or settlement shall be final and conclusive on the claimant, and shall constitute a complete release of any claim against the United States and against the employee of the government whose act or omission gave rise to the claim, by reason of the same subject matter.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 983; Apr. 25, 1949, ch. 92, §2(b), 63 Stat. 62; May 24, 1949, ch. 139, §125, 63 Stat. 106; Sept. 23, 1950, ch. 1010, §9, 64 Stat. 987; Pub. L. 86-238, §1(1), Sept. 8, 1959, 73 Stat. 471; Pub. L. 89-506, §§1, 9(a), July 18, 1966, 80 Stat. 306, 308; Pub. L. 101-552, §8(a), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2746.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

1948 ACT

Based on title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §921 (Aug. 2, 1946, ch. 753, §403, 60 Stat. 843).

The phrase “accruing on and after January 1, 1945” was omitted because executed as of the date of the enactment of this revised title.

Changes were made in phraseology.

1949 ACT

This section corrects a typographical error in section 2672 of title 28, U.S.C.

AMENDMENTS

1990—Pub. L. 101-552 inserted at end of first par. “Notwithstanding the proviso contained in the preceding sentence, any award, compromise, or settlement may be effected without the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his or her designee, to the extent that the Attorney General delegates to the head of the agency the authority to make such award, compromise, or settlement. Such delegations may not exceed the authority delegated by the Attorney General to the United States attorneys to settle claims for money damages against the United States. Each Fed-

eral agency may use arbitration, or other alternative means of dispute resolution under the provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 5 of title 5, to settle any tort claim against the United States, to the extent of the agency's authority to award, compromise, or settle such claim without the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his or her designee."

1966—Pub. L. 89-506 substituted "claims" for "claims of \$2,500 or less" in section catchline, authorized administrative settlement of tort claims, in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Attorney General, of up to \$25,000 and, with the prior written approval of the Attorney General or his designee, in excess of \$25,000, inserted "compromise" and "settlement" to list of administrative acts that would be final and conclusive on all officers of the government, authorized the payment of administrative settlements in excess of \$2,500 in the manner similar to judgments and compromises in like causes, and made appropriations and funds which were available for the payment of such judgments and compromises available for the payment of awards, compromises, or settlements under this chapter.

1959—Pub. L. 86-238 substituted "\$2,500" for "\$1,000" in section catchline and text.

1950—Act Sept. 23, 1950, struck out requirement for specific authorization for payment of tort claims in appropriation acts.

1949—Act Apr. 25, 1949, inserted "accruing on or after January 1, 1945" after "United States" in first par.

Act May 24, 1949, substituted "2677" for "2678" in third par.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1966 AMENDMENT

Section 10 of Pub. L. 89-506 provided that: "This Act [amending this section, sections 2401, 2671, 2675, 2677, 2678, and 2679 of this title, section 724a of former Title 31, Money and Finance, and former section 4116 of Title 38, Veterans' Benefits], shall apply to claims accruing six months or more after the date of its enactment [July 18, 1966]."

LAWS UNAFFECTED

Section 424(b) of act Aug. 2, 1946, ch. 753, title IV, 60 Stat. 856, provided that: "Nothing contained herein shall be deemed to repeal any provision of law authorizing any Federal agency to consider, ascertain, adjust, settle, determine, or pay any claim on account of damage to or loss of property or on account of personal injury or death, in cases in which such damage, loss, injury, or death was not caused by any negligent or wrongful act or omission of an employee of the Government while acting within the scope of his office or employment, or any other claim not cognizable under part 2 of this title."

§ 2673. Reports to Congress

The head of each federal agency shall report annually to Congress all claims paid by it under section 2672 of this title, stating the name of each claimant, the amount claimed, the amount awarded, and a brief description of the claim.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 983.)

REPEAL

Section 1(1) of Pub. L. 89-348, Nov. 8, 1965, 79 Stat. 1310, repealed the requirement that an annual report to Congress be made of the administrative adjustment of tort claims of \$2,500 or less, stating the name of each claimant, the amount claimed, the amount awarded, and a brief description of the claim.

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §922 (Aug. 2, 1946, ch. 753, §404, 60 Stat. 843).

Changes were made in phraseology.

§ 2674. Liability of United States

The United States shall be liable, respecting the provisions of this title relating to tort claims, in the same manner and to the same extent as a private individual under like circumstances, but shall not be liable for interest prior to judgment or for punitive damages.

If, however, in any case wherein death was caused, the law of the place where the act or omission complained of occurred provides, or has been construed to provide, for damages only punitive in nature, the United States shall be liable for actual or compensatory damages, measured by the pecuniary injuries resulting from such death to the persons respectively, for whose benefit the action was brought, in lieu thereof.

With respect to any claim under this chapter, the United States shall be entitled to assert any defense based upon judicial or legislative immunity which otherwise would have been available to the employee of the United States whose act or omission gave rise to the claim, as well as any other defenses to which the United States is entitled.

With respect to any claim to which this section applies, the Tennessee Valley Authority shall be entitled to assert any defense which otherwise would have been available to the employee based upon judicial or legislative immunity, which otherwise would have been available to the employee of the Tennessee Valley Authority whose act or omission gave rise to the claim as well as any other defenses to which the Tennessee Valley Authority is entitled under this chapter.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 646, 62 Stat. 983; Pub. L. 100-694, §§4, 9(c), Nov. 18, 1988, 102 Stat. 4564, 4567.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed., §931(a) (Aug. 2, 1946, ch. 753, §410(a), 60 Stat. 843).

Section constitutes the liability provisions in the second sentence of section 931(a) of title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed.

Other provisions of section 931(a) of title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed., are incorporated in sections 1346(b), 1402, 2402, 2411, and 2412 of this title, but the provision of such section 931(a) that the United States shall not be liable for interest prior to judgment was omitted as unnecessary in view of section 2411 of this title, which provides that interest on judgments against the United States shall be computed from the date of judgment. Such section 2411 is made applicable to tort-claim actions by section 932 of title 28, U.S.C., 1940 ed.

Changes were made in phraseology.

SENATE REVISION AMENDMENT

For Senate amendment to this section, see 80th Congress Senate Report No. 1559, amendment No. 60.

AMENDMENTS

1988—Pub. L. 100-694 inserted two pars. at end entitling the United States and the Tennessee Valley Authority to assert any defense based upon judicial or legislative immunity.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1988 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 100-694 effective Nov. 18, 1988, and applicable to all claims, civil actions, and proceedings pending on, or filed on or after, Nov. 18, 1988, see section 8 of Pub. L. 100-694 set out as a note under section 2679 of this title.