

(Added Pub. L. 102-587, title V, §5203(a), Nov. 4, 1992, 106 Stat. 5072; amended Pub. L. 104-324, title VII, §746(b), Oct. 19, 1996, 110 Stat. 3943; Pub. L. 108-271, §8(b), July 7, 2004, 118 Stat. 814.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 645, acts Aug. 4, 1949, ch. 393, §1, 63 Stat. 547; Sept. 3, 1954, ch. 1263, §34, 68 Stat. 1239; Aug. 23, 1958, Pub. L. 85-738, §§4, 5, 72 Stat. 833, provided for settlement of claims incident to activities of Coast Guard, prior to repeal, effective two years after Sept. 26, 1968, by Pub. L. 90-525, §2, Sept. 26, 1968, 82 Stat. 877. See section 2733 of Title 10, Armed Forces.

AMENDMENTS

2004—Subsec. (h)(2). Pub. L. 108-271 substituted “Government Accountability Office” for “General Accounting Office”.

1996—Subsecs. (d) to (h). Pub. L. 104-324 redesignated subsec. (d), relating to disclosure by person with access to a record or testimony, as (e) and redesignated former subsecs. (e) to (h) as (f) to (i), respectively.

§ 646. Admiralty claims against the United States

(a) The Secretary may consider, ascertain, adjust, determine, compromise, or settle, and pay in an amount not more than \$100,000, an admiralty claim against the United States for—

(1) damage caused by a vessel in the Coast Guard service or by other property under the jurisdiction of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating;

(2) compensation for towage and salvage services, including contract salvage, rendered to a vessel in the Coast Guard service or to other property under the jurisdiction of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating; or

(3) damage caused by a maritime tort committed by an agent or employee of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating or by property under the jurisdiction of that Department.

(b) Upon acceptance of payment by the claimant, the settlement or compromise of a claim under this section is final and conclusive notwithstanding any other law.

(c) If a claim under this section is settled or compromised for more than \$100,000, the Secretary shall certify it to Congress.

(Aug. 4, 1949, ch. 393, 63 Stat. 548; Pub. L. 86-533, §1(3)(A), June 29, 1960, 74 Stat. 245; Pub. L. 92-417, §2(a), Aug. 29, 1972, 86 Stat. 655.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Based on title 14, U.S.C., 1946 ed., §71 (June 15, 1936, ch. 550, 49 Stat. 1514; July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title VII, §711, 58 Stat. 714; Aug. 13, 1946, ch. 958, §5, 60 Stat. 1051).

This section closely parallels title 46, U.S.C., 1946 ed., §§797, 798, which authorizes the Secretary of the Navy to negotiate amicable settlement of claims against the United States arising out of the operation of Naval vessels. It grants similar authority to the Secretary of the Treasury in relation to vessels in the Coast Guard service, and the limiting amount is reduced from \$1,000,000 to \$25,000. It is believed that this section will work to the benefit of the Government by reducing civil litigation and the number of claims which must presently be certified to Congress for appropriations in order to make settlement. It will greatly expedite the settlement of just claims and should result in a considerable overall savings to the Government. 81st Congress, House Report No. 557.

AMENDMENTS

1972—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 92-417 incorporated in part first sentence of former subsec. (a) in text preceding par. (1), substituted “Secretary” for “Secretary of the Treasury”, inserted provisions authorizing payments up to \$100,000, struck out second, third, and fourth sentences providing that provisions of this section were supplementary to other provisions, that claims in excess of \$3,000 accrued prior to Sept. 8, 1939, would not be considered, and that payments be made out of Coast Guard appropriations, and added pars. (1) to (3).

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 92-417 incorporated in part first sentence of former subsec. (a).

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 92-417 incorporated provisions of last sentence of former subsec. (a) and substituted “100,000” for “25,000”.

1960—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 86-533 repealed subsec. (b) which required the Secretary of the Treasury to report to the Congress the payment of claims determined, compromised, settled, or paid.

§ 647. Claims for damage to property of the United States

The Secretary may consider, ascertain, adjust, determine, compromise, or settle claims for damage cognizable in admiralty in a district court of the United States and all claims for damage caused by a vessel or floating object, to property of the United States under the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard or property for which the Coast Guard may have assumed, by contract or otherwise, any obligation to respond for damage thereto. The Secretary is further authorized to receive in payment of any such claim the amount due the United States pursuant to determination, compromise, or settlement as herein authorized and, upon acceptance of such payment but not until then, such determination, settlement, or compromise of such claim shall be final and conclusive for all purposes, any law to the contrary notwithstanding. All such payments shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States as miscellaneous receipts. The Secretary is further authorized to execute on behalf of the United States and to deliver in exchange for such payment a full release of such claim. This section, as respects the determination, compromise, settlement, and payment of claims, shall be supplementary to, and not in lieu of, all other provisions of law authorizing the determination, compromise, or settlement of claims for damage to property hereinabove described. No settlement or compromise where there is involved a payment in the net amount of over \$100,000 is authorized by this section.

(Aug. 4, 1949, ch. 393, 63 Stat. 549; Pub. L. 86-533, §1(3)(B), June 29, 1960, 74 Stat. 245; Pub. L. 94-546, §1(34), Oct. 18, 1976, 90 Stat. 2521; Pub. L. 98-557, §17(b)(3)(A), Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2868.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

This section closely parallels title 34, U.S.C., 1946 ed., §§600a, 600b, which authorize the Secretary of the Navy to negotiate amicable settlements of affirmative claims of the United States for damage to Government property. Experience gained by the Navy since enactment of title 34, U.S.C., 1946 ed., §§600a-600d, indicates that such amicable settlement reacts to the benefit of the Government in many cases. The provisions of this section would complement those of section 646 of this title and the two sections together would permit the Coast Guard to negotiate the settlement of claims arising out of Coast Guard floating operations, both for and