

cepted generally as an authoritative precedent;

(2) the matter involves or may bear upon significant questions of Government policy that require additional procedures before a final resolution may be made, and such a proceeding would not likely serve to develop a recommended policy for the agency;

(3) maintaining established policies is of special importance, so that variations among individual decisions are not increased and such a proceeding would not likely reach consistent results among individual decisions;

(4) the matter significantly affects persons or organizations who are not parties to the proceeding;

(5) a full public record of the proceeding is important, and a dispute resolution proceeding cannot provide such a record; and

(6) the agency must maintain continuing jurisdiction over the matter with authority to alter the disposition of the matter in the light of changed circumstances, and a dispute resolution proceeding would interfere with the agency's fulfilling that requirement.

(c) Alternative means of dispute resolution authorized under this subchapter are voluntary procedures which supplement rather than limit other available agency dispute resolution techniques.

(Added Pub. L. 101-552, §4(b), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2739, §582; renumbered §572, Pub. L. 102-354, §3(b)(2), Aug. 26, 1992, 106 Stat. 944.)

CODIFICATION

Section 572 of former Title 5, Executive Departments and Government Officers and Employees, was transferred to section 2257 of Title 7, Agriculture.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 572 was renumbered section 592 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

1992—Pub. L. 102-354 renumbered section 582 of this title as this section.

§ 573. Neutrals

(a) A neutral may be a permanent or temporary officer or employee of the Federal Government or any other individual who is acceptable to the parties to a dispute resolution proceeding. A neutral shall have no official, financial, or personal conflict of interest with respect to the issues in controversy, unless such interest is fully disclosed in writing to all parties and all parties agree that the neutral may serve.

(b) A neutral who serves as a conciliator, facilitator, or mediator serves at the will of the parties.

(c) The President shall designate an agency or designate or establish an interagency committee to facilitate and encourage agency use of dispute resolution under this subchapter. Such agency or interagency committee, in consultation with other appropriate Federal agencies and professional organizations experienced in matters concerning dispute resolution, shall—

(1) encourage and facilitate agency use of alternative means of dispute resolution; and

(2) develop procedures that permit agencies to obtain the services of neutrals on an expedited basis.

(d) An agency may use the services of one or more employees of other agencies to serve as neutrals in dispute resolution proceedings. The agencies may enter into an interagency agreement that provides for the reimbursement by the user agency or the parties of the full or partial cost of the services of such an employee.

(e) Any agency may enter into a contract with any person for services as a neutral, or for training in connection with alternative means of dispute resolution. The parties in a dispute resolution proceeding shall agree on compensation for the neutral that is fair and reasonable to the Government.

(Added Pub. L. 101-552, §4(b), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2739, §583; renumbered §573, Pub. L. 102-354, §3(b)(2), Aug. 26, 1992, 106 Stat. 944; amended Pub. L. 104-320, §7(b), Oct. 19, 1996, 110 Stat. 3872.)

CODIFICATION

Section 573 of former Title 5, Executive Departments and Government Officers and Employees, was transferred to section 2258 of Title 7, Agriculture.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 573 was renumbered section 593 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 104-320, §7(b)(1), added subsec. (c) and struck out former subsec. (c) which related to power of Administrative Conference of the United States to establish and utilize standards for neutrals and to enter into contracts for services of neutrals.

Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 104-320, §7(b)(2), struck out "on a roster established under subsection (c)(2) or a roster maintained by other public or private organizations, or individual" after "contract with any person".

1992—Pub. L. 102-354 renumbered section 583 of this title as this section.

§ 574. Confidentiality

(a) Except as provided in subsections (d) and (e), a neutral in a dispute resolution proceeding shall not voluntarily disclose or through discovery or compulsory process be required to disclose any dispute resolution communication or any communication provided in confidence to the neutral, unless—

(1) all parties to the dispute resolution proceeding and the neutral consent in writing, and, if the dispute resolution communication was provided by a nonparty participant, that participant also consents in writing;

(2) the dispute resolution communication has already been made public;

(3) the dispute resolution communication is required by statute to be made public, but a neutral should make such communication public only if no other person is reasonably available to disclose the communication; or

(4) a court determines that such testimony or disclosure is necessary to—

(A) prevent a manifest injustice;

(B) help establish a violation of law; or

(C) prevent harm to the public health or safety,

of sufficient magnitude in the particular case to outweigh the integrity of dispute resolution proceedings in general by reducing the confidence of parties in future cases that their communications will remain confidential.

(b) A party to a dispute resolution proceeding shall not voluntarily disclose or through discovery or compulsory process be required to disclose any dispute resolution communication, unless—

- (1) the communication was prepared by the party seeking disclosure;
- (2) all parties to the dispute resolution proceeding consent in writing;
- (3) the dispute resolution communication has already been made public;
- (4) the dispute resolution communication is required by statute to be made public;
- (5) a court determines that such testimony or disclosure is necessary to—
 - (A) prevent a manifest injustice;
 - (B) help establish a violation of law; or
 - (C) prevent harm to the public health and safety,

of sufficient magnitude in the particular case to outweigh the integrity of dispute resolution proceedings in general by reducing the confidence of parties in future cases that their communications will remain confidential;

(6) the dispute resolution communication is relevant to determining the existence or meaning of an agreement or award that resulted from the dispute resolution proceeding or to the enforcement of such an agreement or award; or

(7) except for dispute resolution communications generated by the neutral, the dispute resolution communication was provided to or was available to all parties to the dispute resolution proceeding.

(c) Any dispute resolution communication that is disclosed in violation of subsection (a) or (b), shall not be admissible in any proceeding relating to the issues in controversy with respect to which the communication was made.

(d)(1) The parties may agree to alternative confidential procedures for disclosures by a neutral. Upon such agreement the parties shall inform the neutral before the commencement of the dispute resolution proceeding of any modifications to the provisions of subsection (a) that will govern the confidentiality of the dispute resolution proceeding. If the parties do not so inform the neutral, subsection (a) shall apply.

(2) To qualify for the exemption established under subsection (j), an alternative confidential procedure under this subsection may not provide for less disclosure than the confidential procedures otherwise provided under this section.

(e) If a demand for disclosure, by way of discovery request or other legal process, is made upon a neutral regarding a dispute resolution communication, the neutral shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parties and any affected nonparty participants of the demand. Any party or affected nonparty participant who receives such notice and within 15 calendar days does not offer to defend a refusal of the neutral to disclose the requested information shall have waived any objection to such disclosure.

(f) Nothing in this section shall prevent the discovery or admissibility of any evidence that is otherwise discoverable, merely because the evidence was presented in the course of a dispute resolution proceeding.

(g) Subsections (a) and (b) shall have no effect on the information and data that are necessary to document an agreement reached or order issued pursuant to a dispute resolution proceeding.

(h) Subsections (a) and (b) shall not prevent the gathering of information for research or educational purposes, in cooperation with other agencies, governmental entities, or dispute resolution programs, so long as the parties and the specific issues in controversy are not identifiable.

(i) Subsections (a) and (b) shall not prevent use of a dispute resolution communication to resolve a dispute between the neutral in a dispute resolution proceeding and a party to or participant in such proceeding, so long as such dispute resolution communication is disclosed only to the extent necessary to resolve such dispute.

(j) A dispute resolution communication which is between a neutral and a party and which may not be disclosed under this section shall also be exempt from disclosure under section 552(b)(3).

(Added Pub. L. 101-552, §4(b), Nov. 15, 1990, 104 Stat. 2740, § 584; renumbered §574, Pub. L. 102-354, §3(b)(2), Aug. 26, 1992, 106 Stat. 944; amended Pub. L. 104-320, §3, Oct. 19, 1996, 110 Stat. 3870.)

CODIFICATION

Section 574 of former Title 5, Executive Departments and Government Officers and Employees, was transferred to section 2255 of Title 7, Agriculture.

Section 574a of former Title 5, Executive Departments and Government Officers and Employees, was transferred to section 2226 of Title 7.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 574 was renumbered section 594 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsecs. (a), (b). Pub. L. 104-320, §3(a), in introductory provisions struck out “any information concerning” after “be required to disclose”.

Subsec. (b)(7). Pub. L. 104-320, §3(b), amended par. (7) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (7) read as follows: “the dispute resolution communication was provided to or was available to all parties to the dispute resolution proceeding”.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 104-320, §3(c), designated existing provisions as par. (1) and added par. (2).

Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 104-320, §3(d), amended subsec. (j) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (j) read as follows: “This section shall not be considered a statute specifically exempting disclosure under section 552(b)(3) of this title.”

1992—Pub. L. 102-354 renumbered section 584 of this title as this section.

§ 575. Authorization of arbitration

(a)(1) Arbitration may be used as an alternative means of dispute resolution whenever all parties consent. Consent may be obtained either before or after an issue in controversy has arisen. A party may agree to—

- (A) submit only certain issues in controversy to arbitration; or
- (B) arbitration on the condition that the award must be within a range of possible outcomes.

(2) The arbitration agreement that sets forth the subject matter submitted to the arbitrator shall be in writing. Each such arbitration agree-