

7504. Regulations.

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AMENDMENTS

2017—Pub. L. 115–91, div. A, title X, §1097(e)(2), Dec. 12, 2017, 131 Stat. 1622, added item 7515 and struck out former item 7515 “Discipline of supervisors based on retaliation against whistleblowers”. Item was added to and stricken from analysis for this chapter, notwithstanding directory language adding item to, and striking item from, analysis for subchapter II of this chapter.

Pub. L. 115–73, title I, §104(b), Oct. 26, 2017, 131 Stat. 1238, added item 7515. Item was added to analysis for this chapter, notwithstanding directory language adding item to analysis for subchapter II of this chapter.

1978—Pub. L. 95–454, title II, §204(b), title IV, §411(1), Oct. 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1137, 1173, substituted “SUSPENSION OF 14 DAYS OR LESS” for “COMPETITIVE SERVICE” in subchapter I heading, substituted “Definitions” for “Cause; procedure; exception” in item 7501, added items 7502 to 7504, substituted “REMOVAL, SUSPENSION FOR MORE THAN 14 DAYS, REDUCTION IN GRADE OR PAY, OR FURLOUGH FOR 30 DAYS OR LESS” for “PREFERENCE ELIGIBLES” in subchapter II heading, inserted “; application” in item 7511, substituted “Actions covered” for “Cause; procedure; exception” in item 7512, added items 7513 and 7514, substituted “ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES” for “HEARING EXAMINERS” in subchapter III heading, substituted “Actions against administrative law judges” for “Removal” in item 7521, and added subchapter V heading and items 7541 to 7543.

EX. ORD. NO. 13839. PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY AND STREAMLINING REMOVAL PROCEDURES CONSISTENT WITH MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

Ex. Ord. No. 13839, May 25, 2018, 83 F.R. 25343, provided:

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 1104(a)(1), 3301, and 7301 of title 5, United States Code, and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and to ensure the effective functioning of the executive branch, it is hereby ordered as follows:

SECTION 1. Purpose. Merit system principles call for holding Federal employees accountable for performance and conduct. They state that employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest, and that the Federal workforce should be used efficiently and effectively. They further state that employees should be retained based on the adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards. Unfortunately,

implementation of America’s civil service laws has fallen far short of these ideals. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey has consistently found that less than one-third of Federal employees believe that the Government deals with poor performers effectively. Failure to address unacceptable performance and misconduct undermines morale, burdens good performers with subpar colleagues, and inhibits the ability of executive agencies (as defined in section 105 of title 5, United States Code, but excluding the Government Accountability Office) (agencies) to accomplish their missions. This order advances the ability of supervisors in agencies to promote civil servant accountability consistent with merit system principles while simultaneously recognizing employees’ procedural rights and protections. **SEC. 2. Principles for Accountability in the Federal Workforce.** (a) Removing unacceptable performers should be a straightforward process that minimizes the burden on supervisors. Agencies should limit opportunity periods to demonstrate acceptable performance under section 4302(c)(6) of title 5, United States Code, to the amount of time that provides sufficient opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance.

(b) Supervisors and deciding officials should not be required to use progressive discipline. The penalty for an instance of misconduct should be tailored to the facts and circumstances.

(c) Each employee’s work performance and disciplinary history is unique, and disciplinary action should be calibrated to the specific facts and circumstances of each individual employee’s situation. Conduct that justifies discipline of one employee at one time does not necessarily justify similar discipline of a different employee at a different time -- particularly where the employees are in different work units or chains of supervision -- and agencies are not prohibited from removing an employee simply because they did not remove a different employee for comparable conduct. Nonetheless, employees should be treated equitably, so agencies should consider appropriate comparators as they evaluate potential disciplinary actions.

(d) Suspension should not be a substitute for removal in circumstances in which removal would be appropriate. Agencies should not require suspension of an employee before proposing to remove that employee, except as may be appropriate under applicable facts.

(e) When taking disciplinary action, agencies should have discretion to take into account an employee’s disciplinary record and past work record, including all past misconduct -- not only similar past misconduct. Agencies should provide an employee with appropriate notice when taking a disciplinary action.

(f) To the extent practicable, agencies should issue decisions on proposed removals taken under chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code [5 U.S.C. 7501 et seq.], within 15 business days of the end of the employee reply period following a notice of proposed removal.

(g) To the extent practicable, agencies should limit the written notice of adverse action to the 30 days prescribed in section 7513(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code.

(h) The removal procedures set forth in chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code (Chapter 75 procedures), should be used in appropriate cases to address instances of unacceptable performance.

(i) A probationary period should be used as the final step in the hiring process of a new employee. Supervisors should use that period to assess how well an employee can perform the duties of a job. A probationary period can be a highly effective tool to evaluate a candidate’s potential to be an asset to an agency before the candidate’s appointment becomes final.

(j) Following issuance of regulations under section 7 of this order, agencies should prioritize performance over length of service when determining which employees will be retained following a reduction in force.

SEC. 3. Standard for Negotiating Grievance Procedures. Whenever reasonable in view of the particular circumstances, agency heads shall endeavor to exclude from the application of any grievance procedures negotiated

under section 7121 of title 5, United States Code, any dispute concerning decisions to remove any employee from Federal service for misconduct or unacceptable performance. Each agency shall commit the time and resources necessary to achieve this goal and to fulfill its obligation to bargain in good faith. If an agreement cannot be reached, the agency shall, to the extent permitted by law, promptly request the assistance of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and, as necessary, the Federal Service Impasses Panel in the resolution of the disagreement. Within 30 days after the adoption of any collective bargaining agreement that fails to achieve this goal, the agency head shall provide an explanation to the President, through the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM Director).

SEC. 4. *Managing the Federal Workforce.* To promote good morale in the Federal workforce, employee accountability, and high performance, and to ensure the effective and efficient accomplishment of agency missions and the efficiency of the Federal service, to the extent consistent with law, no agency shall:

(a) subject to grievance procedures or binding arbitration disputes concerning:

(i) the assignment of ratings of record; or
(ii) the award of any form of incentive pay, including cash awards; quality step increases; or recruitment, retention, or relocation payments;

(b) make any agreement, including a collective bargaining agreement:

(i) that limits the agency's discretion to employ Chapter 75 procedures to address unacceptable performance of an employee;

(ii) that requires the use of procedures under chapter 43 of title 5, United States Code [5 U.S.C. 4301 et seq.] (including any performance assistance period or similar informal period to demonstrate improved performance prior to the initiation of an opportunity period under section 4302(c)(6) of title 5, United States Code), before removing an employee for unacceptable performance; or

(iii) that limits the agency's discretion to remove an employee from Federal service without first engaging in progressive discipline; or

(c) generally afford an employee more than a 30-day period to demonstrate acceptable performance under section 4302(c)(6) of title 5, United States Code, except when the agency determines in its sole and exclusive discretion that a longer period is necessary to provide sufficient time to evaluate an employee's performance.

SEC. 5. *Ensuring Integrity of Personnel Files.* Agencies shall not agree to erase, remove, alter, or withhold from another agency any information about a civilian employee's performance or conduct in that employee's official personnel records, including an employee's Official Personnel Folder and Employee Performance File, as part of, or as a condition to, resolving a formal or informal complaint by the employee or settling an administrative challenge to an adverse personnel action.

SEC. 6. *Data Collection of Adverse Actions.* (a) For fiscal year 2018, and for each fiscal year thereafter, each agency shall provide a report to the OPM Director containing the following information:

(i) the number of civilian employees in a probationary period or otherwise employed for a specific term who were removed by the agency;

(ii) the number of civilian employees reprimanded in writing by the agency;

(iii) the number of civilian employees afforded an opportunity period by the agency under section 4302(c)(6) of title 5, United States Code, breaking out the number of such employees receiving an opportunity period longer than 30 days;

(iv) the number of adverse personnel actions taken against civilian employees by the agency, broken down by type of adverse personnel action, including reduction in grade or pay (or equivalent), suspension, and removal;

(v) the number of decisions on proposed removals by the agency taken under chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code, not issued within 15 business days of the end of the employee reply period;

(vi) the number of adverse personnel actions by the agency for which employees received written notice in excess of the 30 days prescribed in section 7513(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code;

(vii) the number and key terms of settlements reached by the agency with civilian employees in cases arising out of adverse personnel actions; and

(viii) the resolutions of litigation about adverse personnel actions involving civilian employees reached by the agency.

(b) Compilation and submission of the data required by subsection (a) of this section shall be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, including those governing privacy and data security.

(c) To enhance public accountability of agencies for their management of the Federal workforce, the OPM Director shall, consistent with applicable law, publish the information received under subsection (a) of this section, at the minimum level of aggregation necessary to protect personal privacy. The OPM Director may withhold particular information if publication would unduly risk disclosing information protected by law, including personally identifiable information.

(d) Within 60 days of the date of this order [May 25, 2018], the OPM Director shall issue guidance regarding the implementation of this section, including with respect to any exemptions necessary for compliance with applicable law and the reporting format for submissions required by subsection (a) of this section.

SEC. 7. *Implementation.* (a) Within 45 days of the date of this order, the OPM Director shall examine whether existing regulations effectuate the principles set forth in section 2 of this order and the requirements of sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this order. To the extent necessary or appropriate, the OPM Director shall, as soon as practicable, propose for notice and public comment appropriate regulations to effectuate the principles set forth in section 2 of this order and the requirements of sections 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this order.

(b) The head of each agency shall take steps to conform internal agency discipline and unacceptable performance policies to the principles and requirements of this order. To the extent consistent with law, each agency head shall:

(i) within 45 days of this order, revise its discipline and unacceptable performance policies to conform to the principles and requirements of this order, in areas where new final Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations are not required, and shall further revise such policies as necessary to conform to any new final OPM regulations, within 45 days of the issuance of such regulations; and

(ii) renegotiate, as applicable, any collective bargaining agreement provisions that are inconsistent with any part of this order or any final OPM regulations promulgated pursuant to this order. Each agency shall give any contractually required notice of its intent to alter the terms of such agreement and reopen negotiations. Each agency shall, to the extent consistent with law, subsequently conform such terms to the requirements of this order, and to any final OPM regulations issued pursuant to this order, on the earliest practicable date permitted by law.

(c) Within 15 months of the adoption of any final rules issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the OPM Director shall submit to the President a report, through the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, evaluating the effect of those rules, including their effect on the ability of Federal supervisors to hold employees accountable for their performance.

(d) Within a reasonable amount of time following the adoption of any final rules issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the OPM Director and the Chief Human Capital Officers Council shall undertake a Government-wide initiative to educate Federal supervisors about holding employees accountable for unacceptable performance or misconduct under those rules.

SEC. 8. *General Provisions.* (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) Agencies shall consult with employee labor representatives about the implementation of this order. Nothing in this order shall abrogate any collective bargaining agreement in effect on the date of this order.

(c) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(e) If any provision of this order, including any of its applications, is held to be invalid, the remainder of this order and all of its other applications shall not be affected thereby.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

SUBCHAPTER I—SUSPENSION FOR 14 DAYS OR LESS

AMENDMENTS

1978—Pub. L. 95-454, title II, §204(a), Oct. 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1134, substituted “SUSPENSION FOR 14 DAYS OR LESS” for “COMPETITIVE SERVICE” in subchapter heading.

§ 7501. Definitions

For the purpose of this subchapter—

(1) “employee” means an individual in the competitive service who is not serving a probationary or trial period under an initial appointment or, except as provided in section 1599e of title 10, who has completed 1 year of current continuous employment in the same or similar positions under other than a temporary appointment limited to 1 year or less; and

(2) “suspension” means the placing of an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay.

(Added Pub. L. 95-454, title II, §204(a), Oct. 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1134; amended Pub. L. 114-92, div. A, title XI, §1105(c)(3), Nov. 25, 2015, 129 Stat. 1024.)

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 7501, Pub. L. 89-554, Sept. 6, 1966, 80 Stat. 527, related to removal or suspension without pay of an individual in the competitive service and procedures applicable to such removal or suspension, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 95-454, §204(a).

AMENDMENTS

2015—Par. (1). Pub. L. 114-92 substituted “or, except as provided in section 1599e of title 10, who” for “or who”.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 90 days after Oct. 13, 1978, see section 907 of Pub. L. 95-454, set out as an Effective Date of 1978 Amendment note under section 1101 of this title.

SHORT TITLE OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 101-376, §1, Aug. 17, 1990, 104 Stat. 461, provided that: “This Act [amending sections 4303, 7511, and 7701 of this title and enacting provisions set out as notes under section 4303 of this title] may be cited as the ‘Civil Service Due Process Amendments.’”

§ 7502. Actions covered

This subchapter applies to a suspension for 14 days or less, but does not apply to a suspension

under section 7521 or 7532 of this title or any action initiated under section 1215 of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 95-454, title II, §204(a), Oct. 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1135; amended Pub. L. 101-12, §9(a)(2), Apr. 10, 1989, 103 Stat. 35.)

AMENDMENTS

1989—Pub. L. 101-12 substituted “1215” for “1206”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1989 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101-12 effective 90 days following Apr. 10, 1989, see section 11 of Pub. L. 101-12, set out as a note under section 1201 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 90 days after Oct. 13, 1978, see section 907 of Pub. L. 95-454, set out as an Effective Date of 1978 Amendment note under section 1101 of this title.

§ 7503. Cause and procedure

(a) Under regulations prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management, an employee may be suspended for 14 days or less for such cause as will promote the efficiency of the service (including discourteous conduct to the public confirmed by an immediate supervisor’s report of four such instances within any one-year period or any other pattern of discourteous conduct).

(b) An employee against whom a suspension for 14 days or less is proposed is entitled to—

(1) an advance written notice stating the specific reasons for the proposed action;

(2) a reasonable time to answer orally and in writing and to furnish affidavits and other documentary evidence in support of the answer;

(3) be represented by an attorney or other representative; and

(4) a written decision and the specific reasons therefor at the earliest practicable date.

(c) Copies of the notice of proposed action, the answer of the employee if written, a summary thereof if made orally, the notice of decision and reasons therefor, and any order effecting¹ the suspension, together with any supporting material, shall be maintained by the agency and shall be furnished to the Merit Systems Protection Board upon its request and to the employee affected upon the employee’s request.

(Added Pub. L. 95-454, title II, §204(a), Oct. 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1135.)

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 90 days after Oct. 13, 1978, see section 907 of Pub. L. 95-454, set out as an Effective Date of 1978 Amendment note under section 1101 of this title.

INFORMATION ON APPEAL RIGHTS

Pub. L. 115-91, div. A, title X, §1097(b)(2), Dec. 12, 2017, 131 Stat. 1617, provided that:

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Any notice provided to an employee under section 7503(b)(1), section 7513(b)(1), or section 7543(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code, shall include detailed information with respect to—

“(i) the right of the employee to appeal an action brought under the applicable section;

“(ii) the forums in which the employee may file an appeal described in clause (i); and

“(iii) any limitations on the rights of the employee that would apply because of the forum in which the employee decides to file an appeal.

¹ So in original. Probably should be “affecting”.