

PART 2571—PROCEDURAL REGULATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT UNDER THE EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT INCOME SECURITY ACT

Subpart A—Procedures for Administrative Hearings on the Issuance of Cease and Desist Orders Under ERISA Section 521—Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements

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Subpart B [Reserved]

AUTHORITY: 29 U.S.C. 1002(40), 1132, 1135; and 1151, Secretary of Labor's Order 1–2011, 77 FR 1088 (January 9, 2012).

SOURCE: 78 FR 13808, Mar. 1, 2013, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Procedures for Administrative Hearings on the Issuance of Cease and Desist Orders Under ERISA Section 521—Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements

§ 2571.1 Scope of rules.

The rules of practice set forth in this part apply to ex parte cease and desist order proceedings under section 521 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA). The rules of procedure for administrative hearings published by the Department's Office of Administrative Law Judges at Part 18 of this Title will apply to matters arising under ERISA section 521 except as modified by this section. These proceedings shall be conducted as expeditiously as possible, and the parties and the Office of the Administrative Law Judges shall make

every effort to avoid delay at each stage of the proceedings.

§ 2571.2 Definitions.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of the definitions in § 18.2 of this title:

(a) *Adjudicatory proceeding* means a judicial-type proceeding before an administrative law judge leading to an order;

(b) *Administrative law judge* means an administrative law judge appointed pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 3105;

(c) *Answer* means a written statement that is supported by reference to specific circumstances or facts surrounding the temporary order issued pursuant to 29 CFR 2560.521–1(c);

(d) *Commencement of proceeding* is the filing of an answer by the respondent;

(e) *Consent agreement* means a proposed written agreement and order containing a specified proposed remedy or other relief acceptable to the Secretary and consenting parties;

(f) *Final order* means a cease and desist order that is a final order of the Secretary of Labor under ERISA section 521. Such final order may result from a decision of an administrative law judge or of the Secretary on review of a decision of an administrative law judge, or from the failure of a party to invoke the procedures for a hearing under 29 CFR 2560.521–1 within the prescribed time limit. A final order shall constitute a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704;

(g) *Hearing* means that part of a section 521 proceeding which involves the submission of evidence, either by oral presentation or written submission, to the administrative law judge;

(h) *Order* means the whole or any part of a final procedural or substantive disposition of a section 521 proceeding;

(i) *Party* includes a person or agency named or admitted as a party to a section 521 proceeding;

(j) *Person* includes an individual, partnership, corporation, employee welfare benefit plan, association, or other entity or organization;

(k) *Petition* means a written request, made by a person or party, for some affirmative action;

(l) *Respondent* means the party against whom the Secretary is seeking to impose a cease and desist order under ERISA section 521;

(m) *Secretary* means the Secretary of Labor or his or her delegate;

(n) *Section 521 proceeding* means an adjudicatory proceeding relating to the issuance of a temporary order under 29 CFR 2560.521-1 and section 521 of ERISA;

(o) *Solicitor* means the Solicitor of Labor or his or her delegate; and

(p) *Temporary order* means the temporary cease and desist order issued by the Secretary under 29 CFR 2560.521-1(c) and section 521 of ERISA.

§ 2571.3 Service: copies of documents and pleadings.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.3 of this title:

(a) *In general.* Copies of all documents shall be served on all parties of record. All documents should clearly designate the docket number, if any, and short title of all matters. All documents to be filed shall be delivered or mailed to the Chief Docket Clerk, Office of Administrative Law Judges, 800 K Street NW., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20001-8002, or to the OALJ Regional Office to which the section 521 proceeding may have been transferred for hearing. Each document filed shall be clear and legible.

(b) *By parties.* All motions, petitions, pleadings, briefs, or other documents shall be filed with the Office of Administrative Law Judges with a copy, including any attachments, to all other parties of record. When a party is represented by an attorney, service shall be made upon the attorney. Service of any document upon any party may be made by personal delivery or by mailing a copy to the last known address. The Secretary shall be served by delivery to the Associate Solicitor, Plan Benefits Security Division, ERISA Section 521 Proceeding, P.O. Box 1914, Washington, DC 20013 and any attorney named for service of process as set forth in the temporary order. The person serving the document shall certify to the manner of date and service.

(c) *By the Office of Administrative Law Judges.* Service of orders, decisions, and

all other documents shall be made in such manner as the Office of Administrative Law Judges determines to the last known address.

(d) *Form of pleadings.*

(1) Every pleading or other paper filed in a section 521 proceeding shall designate the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) as the agency under which the proceeding is instituted, the title of the proceeding, the docket number (if any) assigned by the Office of Administrative Law Judges and a designation of the type of pleading or paper (e.g., notice, motion to dismiss, etc.). The pleading or paper shall be signed and shall contain the address and telephone number of the party or person representing the party. Although there are no formal specifications for documents, they should be printed when possible on standard size 8½ × 11 inch paper.

(2) Illegible documents, whether handwritten, printed, photocopies, or otherwise, will not be accepted. Papers may be reproduced by any duplicating process provided all copies are clear and legible.

§ 2571.4 Parties.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.10 of this title:

(a) The term “party” wherever used in these rules shall include any person that is a subject of the temporary order and is challenging the temporary order under these section 521 proceedings, and the Secretary. A party challenging a temporary order shall be designated as the “respondent.” The Secretary shall be designated as the “complainant.”

(b) Other persons shall be permitted to participate as parties only if the administrative law judge finds that the final decision could directly and adversely affect them or the class they represent, that they may contribute materially to the disposition of the section 521 proceeding and their interest is not adequately represented by the existing parties, and that in the discretion of the administrative law judge the participation of such persons would be appropriate.

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(c) A person not named in a temporary order, but wishing to participate as a respondent under this section shall submit a petition to the administrative law judge within fifteen (15) days after the person has knowledge of, or should have known about, the section 521 proceeding. The petition shall be filed with the administrative law judge and served on each person who has been made a party at the time of filing. Such petition shall concisely state:

(1) Petitioner's interest in the section 521 proceeding (including how the section 521 proceedings will directly and adversely affect them or the class they represent and why their interest is not adequately represented by the existing parties);

(2) How his or her participation as a party will contribute materially to the disposition of the section 521 proceeding;

(3) Who will appear for the petitioner;

(4) The issues on which petitioner wishes to participate; and

(5) Whether petitioner intends to present witnesses.

(d) Objections to the petition may be filed by a party within fifteen (15) days of the filing of the petition. If objections to the petition are filed, the administrative law judge shall then determine whether petitioners have the requisite interest to be a party in the section 521 proceeding, as defined in paragraph (b) of this section, and shall permit or deny participation accordingly. Where persons with common interest file petitions to participate as parties in a section 521 proceeding, the administrative law judge may request all such petitioners to designate a single representative, or the administrative law judge may designate one or more of the petitioners to represent the others. The administrative law judge shall give each such petitioner, as well as the parties, written notice of the decision on his or her petition. For each petition granted, the administrative law judge shall provide a brief statement of the basis of the decision. If the petition is denied, he or she shall briefly state the grounds for denial and may consider whether to treat the petition as a request for participation as *amicus curiae*.

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§ 2571.5 Consequences of default.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.5(b) of this title. Failure of the respondent to file an answer to the temporary order within the 30-day period provided by 29 CFR 2560.521-1(e) shall constitute a waiver of the respondent's right to appear and contest the temporary order. Such failure shall also be deemed to be an admission of the facts as alleged in the temporary order for purposes of any proceeding involving the order issued under section 521 of ERISA. The temporary order shall then become the final order of the Secretary, within the meaning of 29 CFR 2571.2(f), 30 days from the date of the service of the temporary order.

§ 2571.6 Consent order or settlement.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.9 of this title:

(a) *In general.* At any time after the commencement of a section 521 proceeding, the parties jointly may move to defer the hearing for a reasonable time in order to negotiate a settlement or an agreement containing findings and a consent order disposing of the whole or any part of the section 521 proceeding. The administrative law judge shall have discretion to allow or deny such a postponement and to determine its duration. In exercising this discretion, the administrative law judge shall consider the nature of the section 521 proceeding, the requirements of the public interest, the representations of the parties and the probability of reaching an agreement that will result in a just disposition of the issues involved.

(b) *Content.* Any agreement containing consent findings and an order disposing of the section 521 proceeding or any part thereof shall also provide:

(1) That the consent order shall have the same force and effect as an order made after full hearing;

(2) That the entire record on which the consent order is based shall consist solely of the notice and the agreement;

(3) A waiver of any further procedural steps before the administrative law judge;

(4) A waiver of any right to challenge or contest the validity of the consent

order and decision entered into in accordance with the agreement; and

(5) That the consent order and decision of the administrative law judge shall be final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704.

(c) *Submission.* On or before the expiration of the time granted for negotiations, the parties or their authorized representatives or their counsel may:

(1) Submit the proposed agreement containing consent findings and an order to the administrative law judge;

(2) Notify the administrative law judge that the parties have reached a full settlement and have agreed to dismissal of the action subject to compliance with the terms of the settlement; or

(3) Inform the administrative law judge that agreement cannot be reached.

(d) *Disposition.* If a settlement agreement containing consent findings and an order, agreed to by all the parties to a section 521 proceeding, is submitted within the time allowed therefor, the administrative law judge shall incorporate all of the findings, terms, and conditions of the settlement agreement and consent order of the parties. Such decision shall become a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704.

(e) *Settlement without consent of all respondents.* In cases in which some, but not all, of the respondents to a section 521 proceeding submit an agreement and consent order to the administrative law judge, the following procedure shall apply:

(1) If all of the respondents have not consented to the proposed settlement submitted to the administrative law judge, then such non-consenting parties must receive notice and a copy of the proposed settlement at the time it is submitted to the administrative law judge;

(2) Any non-consenting respondent shall have fifteen (15) days to file any objections to the proposed settlement with the administrative law judge and all other parties;

(3) If any respondent submits an objection to the proposed settlement, the administrative law judge shall decide within thirty (30) days after receipt of such objections whether to sign or re-

ject the proposed settlement. Where the record lacks substantial evidence upon which to base a decision or there is a genuine issue of material fact, then the administrative law judge may establish procedures for the purpose of receiving additional evidence upon which a decision on the contested issue may be reasonably based;

(4) If there are no objections to the proposed settlement, or if the administrative law judge decides to sign the proposed settlement after reviewing any such objections, the administrative law judge shall incorporate the consent agreement into a decision meeting the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section; and

(5) If the consent agreement is incorporated into a decision meeting the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section, the administrative law judge shall continue the section 521 proceeding with respect to any non-consenting respondents.

§ 2571.7 Scope of discovery.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.14 of this title:

(a) A party may file a motion to conduct discovery with the administrative law judge. The administrative law judge may grant a motion for discovery only upon a showing of good cause. In order to establish "good cause" for the purposes of this section, the moving party must show that the requested discovery relates to a genuine issue as to a fact that is material to the section 521 proceeding. The order of the administrative law judge shall expressly limit the scope and terms of the discovery to that for which "good cause" has been shown, as provided in this paragraph.

(b) Any evidentiary privileges apply as they would apply in a civil proceeding in federal district court. For example, legal advice provided by an attorney to a client is generally protected from disclosure. Mental impressions, conclusions, opinions, or legal theories of a party's attorney or other representative developed in anticipation of litigation are also generally protected from disclosure. The administrative law judge may not, however, protect from discovery or use, relevant

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communications between an attorney and a plan administrator or other plan fiduciary, or work product, that fall under the fiduciary exception to the attorney-client or work product privileges. The fiduciary exception to these privileges exists when an attorney advises the plan administrator or other plan fiduciary on matters concerning plan administration or other fiduciary activities. Consequently, the administrative law judge may not protect such communications from discovery or from use by the Secretary in the proceedings. The administrative law judge also may also not protect attorney work product prepared to assist the fiduciary in its fiduciary capacity from discovery or from use by the Secretary in the proceedings. The fiduciary exception does not apply, however, to the extent that communications were made or documents were prepared exclusively to aid the fiduciary personally or for non-fiduciary matters (e.g. settlor acts), provided that the plan did not pay for the legal services. The Secretary need not make a special showing, such as good cause, merely to obtain information or documents covered by the fiduciary exception. Other relevant exceptions to the attorney-client or work product privileges shall also apply.

§ 2571.8 Summary decision.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.41 of this title:

(a) *No genuine issue of material fact.* Where the administrative law judge finds that no issue of a material fact has been raised, he or she may issue a decision which, in the absence of an appeal, pursuant to §§ 2571.10 through 2571.12, shall become a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704.

(b) A decision made under this section, shall include a statement of:

(1) Findings of fact and conclusions of law, and the reasons thereof, on all issues presented; and

(2) Any terms and conditions of the ruling.

(c) A copy of any decision under this section shall be served on each party.

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§ 2571.9 Decision of the administrative law judge.

For section 521 proceedings, this section shall apply in lieu of § 18.57 of this title:

(a) *Proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and order.* Within twenty (20) days of the filing of the transcript of the testimony, or such additional time as the administrative law judge may allow, each party may file with the administrative law judge, subject to the judge's discretion, proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law, and order together with a supporting brief expressing the reasons for such proposals. Such proposals and briefs shall be served on all parties, and shall refer to all portions of the record and to all authorities relied upon in support of each proposal.

(b) *Decision of the administrative law judge.* The administrative law judge shall make his or her decision expeditiously after the conclusion of the section 521 proceeding. The decision of the administrative law judge shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law with reasons therefore upon each material issue of fact or law presented on the record. The decision of the administrative law judge shall be based upon the whole record and shall be supported by reliable and probative evidence. The decision of the administrative law judge shall become final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704 unless an appeal is made pursuant to the procedures set forth in §§ 2571.10 through 2571.12.

§ 2571.10 Review by the Secretary.

(a) The Secretary may review the decision of an administrative law judge. Such review may occur only when a party files a notice of appeal from a decision of an administrative law judge within twenty (20) days of the issuance of such a decision. In all other cases, the decision of the administrative law judge shall become the final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704.

(b) A notice of appeal to the Secretary shall state with specificity the issue(s) in the decision of the administrative law judge on which the party is seeking review. Such notice of appeal must be served on all parties of record.

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(c) Upon receipt of an appeal, the Secretary shall request the Chief Administrative Law Judge to submit to the Secretary a copy of the entire record before the administrative law judge.

§ 2571.11 Scope of review by the Secretary.

The review of the Secretary shall be based on the record established before the administrative law judge. There shall be no opportunity for oral argument.

§ 2571.12 Procedures for review by the Secretary.

(a) Upon receipt of a notice of appeal, the Secretary shall establish a briefing schedule which shall be served on all parties of record. Upon motion of one or more of the parties, the Secretary may, in her discretion, permit the submission of reply briefs.

(b) The Secretary shall issue a decision as promptly as possible after receipt of the briefs of the parties. The Secretary may affirm, modify, or set aside, in whole or in part, the decision on appeal and shall issue a statement of reasons and bases for the action(s) taken. Such decision by the Secretary shall be the final agency action with the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704.

§ 2571.13 Effective date.

This regulation is effective with respect to all cease and desist orders issued by the Secretary under section 521 of ERISA at any time after April 1, 2013.

Subpart B [Reserved]

PART 2575—ADJUSTMENT OF CIVIL PENALTIES UNDER ERISA TITLE I

Subpart A—Adjustment of Civil Penalties Under ERISA Title I

Sec.

- 2575.1 In general.
- 2575.2 Catch-up adjustments to civil monetary penalties.
- 2575.3 Subsequent adjustments to civil monetary penalties.
- 2575.100 In general.
- 2575.209b-1 Adjusted civil penalty under section 209(b).

- 2575.502c-1 Adjusted civil penalty under section 502(c)(1).
- 2575.502c-2 Adjusted civil penalty under section 502(c)(2).
- 2575.502c-3 Adjusted civil penalty under section 502(c)(3).
- 2575.502c-5 Adjusted civil penalty under section 502(c)(5).
- 2575.502c-6 Adjusted civil penalty under section 502(c)(6).

Subparts B-D [Reserved]

AUTHORITY: 29 U.S.C. 1135; 28 U.S.C. 2461 note; Secretary of Labor's Order 1-2003, 68 FR 5374 (Feb. 3, 2003).

SOURCE: 64 FR 42246, Aug. 3, 1999, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Adjustment of Civil Penalties Under ERISA Title I

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 81 FR 43454, July 1, 2016, the authority citation for subpart A of 29 CFR part 2575 was revised, effective Aug. 1, 2016. For the convenience of the user, the revised text is set forth as follows:

AUTHORITY: Pub. L. 101-410, 104 Stat. 890 (28 U.S.C. 2461 note), as amended by section 31001(s) of Pub. L. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321-373, and section 701 of Pub. L. 114-74, 129 Stat. 584; 29 U.S.C 1059(b), 1132(c), 1135 and 1185d; and Secretary of Labor's Order 1-2011, 77 FR 1088 (January 9, 2012).

SOURCE: 62 FR 40699, July 29, 1997, unless otherwise noted. Redesignated at 64 FR 42246, Aug. 3, 1999.

- 2575.1 In general.
- 2575.2 Catch-up adjustments to civil monetary penalties.
- 2575.3 Subsequent adjustments to civil monetary penalties.

§ 2575.1 In general.

In accordance with the requirements of the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990, Pub. L. 104-410, 104 Stat. 890, as amended by the section 31001(s) of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, Pub. L. 104-34, 110 Stat. 1321-373, and section 701 of the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015, Pub. L. 114-74, 129 Stat. 584, (collectively the Inflation Adjustment Act), the applicable civil monetary penalties of title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA), under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Labor (Department) and listed in 29 CFR 2575.2 are adjusted as set forth in