

(2) *Scope of argument.* Argument to be heard on appeal, whether oral or in a written brief, shall be limited to the issues raised by the appeal, except that if the Secretary determines that additional issues should be argued, the parties shall be given reasonable notice of such determination, so as to permit preparation of adequate arguments on all the issues to be argued.

(c) *Response.* Within 20 days after service of an appeal brought by a party to the proceeding, any other party may file a response in support of or in opposition to such appeal.

(d) *Transmittal of record.* Whenever an appeal is filed by a party to the proceeding, the hearing clerk shall transmit to the Secretary the record of the proceeding. Such record shall include: The pleadings; any motions and requests filed, and the rulings thereon; the transcript of the testimony taken at the hearing, as well as the exhibits filed in connection therewith; any statements filed under the shortened procedure; any documents or papers filed in connection with prehearing conferences; such proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders, and briefs in support thereof, as may have been filed in connection with the hearing; the judge's initial decision; and the appeal petition; briefs in support thereof, and responses thereto as may have been filed in the proceeding.

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**§ 900.66 Consideration of appeal by the Secretary and issuance of final order.**

(a) *Consideration of appeal.* As soon as practicable after the receipt of the record from the hearing clerk, or, in case oral argument was had, as soon as practicable thereafter, the Secretary, upon the basis of and after due consideration of the record, shall rule on the appeal. If the Secretary decides that no change or modification of the judge's decision is warranted, he may adopt the Judge's decision as the final order of the Secretary, preserving any right of the party bringing the appeal to seek judicial review of such decision in the proper forum. At no stage of the proceeding between its institution and the issuance of the order shall the Sec-

retary discuss ex parte the merits of the proceeding with any person who is connected with the proceeding in an advocative or an investigative capacity, or with any representative of such person: *Provided, however,* That the Secretary may discuss the merits of the proceeding with such a person if all parties to the proceeding, or their representatives, have been given an opportunity to be present. If, notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, a memorandum or other communication from any party, or from any person acting on behalf of any party, which relates to the merits of the proceeding, receives the personal attention of the Secretary (or, if an official other than the Secretary is to issue the order, then of such other official) during the pendency of the proceeding, such memorandum or communication shall be regarded as argument made in the proceeding and shall be filed with the hearing clerk, who shall serve a copy thereof upon the opposite party to file a reply thereto.

(b) *Issuance of final order.* A final order issued by the Secretary shall be filed with the hearing clerk, who shall serve it upon the parties: *Provided,* That, if the terms of the order differ substantially from those proposed in the decision of the judge, the Secretary shall, if he deems it advisable to do so, direct that a copy of the order be served upon the parties as a tentative order; and, in such event, opportunity shall be given the parties to file exceptions thereto and written arguments or briefs in support of such exceptions. In such case, if exceptions are filed within a period of time (to be fixed by the Secretary but not to exceed 20 days) following the service of the tentative order, the Secretary shall give consideration, to and shall make such changes in the tentative order as he deems to be appropriate; otherwise, the tentative order shall become final, as of the day following the date of expiration of the period fixed for the filing of exceptions.

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