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make payment of such charges on demand may be deemed by the Board as a sufficient ground for striking the testimony of the witness and the evidence the witness has produced.

(g) *Contumacy or refusal to obey a subpoena.* In case of contumacy or refusal to obey a subpoena by a person who resides, if found, or transacts business within the jurisdiction of a U.S. District Court, the Board will apply to the Court through the Attorney General of the United States for an order requiring the person to appear before the Board or a member thereof to give testimony or produce evidence or both. Any failure of any such person to obey the order of the Court may be punished by the Court as a contempt thereof.

[44 FR 13015, Mar. 9, 1979. Redesignated and amended at 60 FR 57939, Nov. 24, 1995]

§ 955.36 Effective Dates and Applicability.

The provisions of §§ 955.9 and 955.13 took effect on October 1, 1995. Pursuant to the Contract Disputes Acts of 1978 (41 U.S.C. 601–613), §§ 955.13 and 955.35 apply to appeals relating to contracts entered into on or after March 1, 1979. All other provisions of this part 955 took effect February 18, 1976. Except as otherwise directed by the Board, these rules shall not apply to appeals docketed prior to their effective dates.

[60 FR 57939, Nov. 24, 1995]

PART 956—RULES OF PRACTICE IN PROCEEDINGS RELATIVE TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR VIOLATION OF RESTRICTIONS ON POST-EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITY

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AUTHORITY: 18 U.S.C. 207(j), 39 U.S.C. 204, 401.

SOURCE: 49 FR 40771, Oct. 17, 1984, unless otherwise noted.

§ 956.1 Authority for rules.

The rules in this part are issued by the Judicial Officer of the Postal Service pursuant to authority delegated by the Postmaster General (39 U.S.C. 204, 401).

§ 956.2 Scope of rules.

The rules in this part shall be applicable in all formal proceedings before the Postal Service pertaining to proposed disciplinary action initiated under § 447.34(e) of this title.

§ 956.3 Definitions.

(a) The term *Ethical Conduct Officer* has the same meaning as in § 447.31 of this title and includes his authorized representative.

(b) *Respondent* means any individual who has been served a written notice of proposed disciplinary action pursuant to § 447.34 of this title.

(c) The *Recorder* means the Recorder of the U.S. Postal Service, 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201–3078.

[49 FR 40771, Oct. 17, 1984, as amended at 63 FR 66051, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 956.4 Initiation of proceedings.

(a) The Ethical Conduct Officer shall initiate a proceeding by serving upon the proposed respondent a written notice of proposed disciplinary action in the manner hereinafter (§ 956.9(d)) provided for the service of all other papers.

(b) The notice shall:

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(1) State that disciplinary action is being proposed;

(2) Inform the respondent of the subsection of section 207 (18 U.S.C. 207) that he is alleged to have violated and of the basis of the allegation;

(3) Inform the respondent of the disciplinary action which is proposed;

(4) Advise the respondent that he may oppose the proposed disciplinary action by filing an answer within 20 days following receipt of the notice;

(5) State that the disciplinary action will not become effective until after a final agency decision is issued;

(6) Inform the respondent of the rules in this part, a copy of which shall be enclosed with the notice.

(c) If no answer is filed within 20 days following the receipt of the notice, the proposed disciplinary action set forth in the notice shall become the final agency decision without further notice to the respondent.

§ 956.5 Answer.

Within 20 days from receipt of the notice of proposed disciplinary action, the respondent may file an answer setting forth simple, concise, and direct statements admitting, denying or explaining each of the allegations set forth in the notice.

§ 956.6 Hearing election.

Either party may, within, 10 days following the filing of the respondent's answer, request a hearing. If a timely request is not made, the case shall be submitted on the record without a hearing. Submission of the case without a hearing does not relieve the parties of the necessity of proving the facts supporting their allegations or defenses. Affidavits, depositions, admissions, answers to interrogatories and stipulations may be employed to supplement the pleadings which constitute the record. The presiding officer may permit such submission to be supplemented by oral argument (transcribed if requested) and by proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law.

§ 956.7 Notice of hearing.

(a) When a request for a hearing is filed, a notice of hearing, stating the time and place thereof and advising the respondent of the consequences of a

failure to appear at the hearing, will be issued (see § 956.10). In setting a hearing date, due regard shall be given to the respondent's need for:

(1) Adequate time to prepare a defense properly; and

(2) An expeditious resolution of allegations that may be damaging to his or her reputation. Subject to those considerations, whenever practicable, the hearing date shall be within 30 days of the date of the notice of hearing.

(b) The notice of proposed disciplinary action and the answer together with the reply, if any, shall become the pleadings in any proceeding in which a hearing is held.

§ 956.8 Reply.

Not more than 15 days from the service of the answer, the Ethical Conduct Officer may submit a reply.

§ 956.9 Service and filing of documents for the record.

(a) Each party shall file with the Recorder pleadings, motions, orders and other documents for the record. The Recorder shall cause copies to be served promptly on other parties to the proceeding and on the presiding officer.

(b) The parties shall submit four copies of all documents unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer. One copy shall be signed as the original.

(c) Documents shall be dated and shall state the docket number and title of the proceeding. Any pleading or other document required by these rules or by order of the presiding officer to be filed by a specified date shall be filed with the Recorder on or before such date. The filing date shall be entered thereon by the Recorder.

(d) Service of all papers shall be effected by mailing the same, postage prepaid registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, or by causing said notice to be personally served on the proposed respondent by an authorized representative of the Postal Service. In the case of personal service, the person making service shall, if possible, secure from the proposed respondent or his agent, a written acknowledgment of receipt of said notice, showing the date and time of such receipt. If the person upon whom service is made will not acknowledge receipt,

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the person effecting service shall execute a statement, showing the time, place and manner of service, which shall constitute evidence of service. The acknowledgment, statement, or return receipt, when service is effected by mail, shall be made a part of the record by the Ethical Conduct Officer. The date of delivery, as shown by the acknowledgment or statement of personal service or the return receipt, shall be the date of service.

§ 956.10 Respondent's failure to appear at the hearing.

If the respondent shall fail to appear at the hearing, the presiding officer shall receive the Ethical Conduct Officer's evidence and render a decision without requirement of further notice to the respondent.

§ 956.11 Amendment of pleadings.

(a) By consent of the parties, a pleading may be amended at any time. Also, a party may move to amend a pleading at any time prior to the close of the hearing, provided that the proposed amendment is reasonably within the scope of the proceeding.

(b) When issues not raised by the pleadings but reasonably within the scope of the proceedings initiated by the notice of proposed disciplinary action are tried by express or implied consent of the parties, they shall be treated in all respects as if they had been raised in the pleadings. Such amendments, as may be necessary to make the pleadings conform to the evidence and to raise such issues, shall be allowed at any time upon the motion of any party.

(c) If a party objects to the introduction of evidence at the hearing on the ground that it is not within the issues framed by the pleadings, but fails to satisfy the presiding officer that an amendment of the pleadings would prejudice him on the merits, the presiding officer may allow the pleadings to be amended and may grant a continuance to enable the objecting party to rebut the evidence presented.

(d) The presiding officer may, upon reasonable notice and upon such terms as are just, permit service of a supplemental pleading setting forth transactions, occurrences, or events which

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have transpired since the date of the pleading sought to be supplemented and which are relevant to any of the issues involved.

§ 956.12 Continuances and extensions.

Continuances and extensions will not be granted by the presiding officer except for good cause shown.

§ 956.13 Hearings.

(a) Hearings are held at 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201-3078, or other locations designated by the presiding officer.

(b) A party may, not later than 7 days prior to the scheduled date of a hearing, file a request that such hearing be held at a place other than that designated in the notice of hearing. He shall support his request with a statement outlining:

(1) The evidence to be offered in such place;

(2) The names and addresses of the witnesses who will testify;

(3) The reasons why such evidence cannot be produced at the place designated in the notice of hearing.

The presiding officer shall give consideration to the convenience and necessity of the parties and the relevance of the evidence to be offered.

[49 FR 40771, Oct. 17, 1984, as amended at 63 FR 66051, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 956.14 Appearances.

(a) A respondent may appear and be heard in person or by attorney.

(b) An attorney may practice before the Postal Service in accordance with applicable rules issued by the Judicial Officer (see part 951 of this chapter).

(c) When a respondent is represented by an attorney, all pleadings and other papers subsequent to the notice of proposed disciplinary action shall be mailed to the attorney.

(d) All counsel shall promptly file notices of appearance. Changes of the respondent's counsel shall be recorded by notices from retiring and succeeding counsel and from the respondent.

(e) After an answer has been filed pursuant to the rules in this part, the Law Department shall represent the Ethical Conduct Officer in further proceedings relative to the hearing and

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shall in its notice of appearance identify the individual member of such department who has been assigned to handle the case on its behalf.

§ 956.15 Presiding officer.

(a) The presiding officer shall be an Administrative Law Judge qualified in accordance with law. The Chief Administrative Law Judge shall assign cases under this part upon rotation so far as practicable. The Judicial Officer may, for good cause found, preside at the reception of evidence upon request of either party.

(b) The presiding officer shall have authority to:

(1) Administer oaths and affirmations;

(2) Examine witnesses;

(3) Rule upon offers of proof, admissibility of evidence, and matters of procedure;

(4) Order any pleading amended upon motion of a party at any time prior to the close of the hearing;

(5) Maintain discipline and decorum and exclude from the hearing any person acting in an indecorous manner;

(6) Require the filing of briefs or memoranda of law on any matter upon which he is required to rule;

(7) Order prehearing conferences for the purposes of the settlement or simplification of issues by the parties;

(8) Permit oral argument by any party;

(9) Order the proceeding reopened at any time prior to his decision for the receipt of additional evidence;

(10) Render an initial decision, if the presiding officer is not the Judicial Officer, which becomes the final agency decision unless a timely appeal is taken; the Judicial Officer may issue a tentative or a final decision;

(11) Take such other and further action as may be necessary properly to decide over the proceeding and render decision therein.

§ 956.16 Burden of proof and evidence.

(a) Each party may introduce and examine witnesses and submit physical evidence. The Ethical Conduct Officer has the burden of proof in any proceeding under this part and must establish a violation by a preponderance of the evidence.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in these rules, the Federal Rules of Evidence shall be applicable to the hearings conducted under this part. Such rules may be relaxed, however, to the extent that the presiding officer deems proper to insure a fair hearing.

(c) Testimony shall be under oath or affirmation, and witnesses shall be subject to cross-examination.

(d) Agreed statements of fact may be received in evidence.

(e) Official notice or knowledge may be taken of the types of matters of which judicial notice or knowledge may be taken.

(f) Each party may present oral argument.

§ 956.17 Discovery—depositions.

(a) The parties are encouraged to engage in voluntary discovery procedures. In connection with any deposition or other discovery procedure, the presiding officer may make any order which justice requires to protect a party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden or expense; and those orders may include limitations on the scope, method, time and place for discovery, and provisions for protecting the secrecy of confidential information or documents.

(b) After an answer has been filed, the parties may mutually agree to, or the presiding officer may, upon application of either party and for good cause shown, order the taking of the testimony of any person by deposition upon oral examination or written interrogatories before any officer authorized to administer oaths at the place of examination, for use as evidence or for purposes of discovery. The application for order shall specify whether the purpose of the deposition is discovery or for use as evidence.

(c) The time, place, and manner of taking depositions shall be mutually agreed by the parties or, failing such agreement, governed by order of the presiding officer.

(d) No testimony taken by depositions shall be considered as part of the evidence in a hearing unless and until such testimony is offered and received in evidence at such hearing. It will not ordinarily be received in evidence if the deponent is present and can testify

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personally at the hearing. In such instances, however, the deposition may be used to contradict or impeach the testimony of the witness given at the hearing. In cases submitted on the record, the presiding officer may, in his discretion, receive depositions as evidence in supplementation of that record.

(e) Each party shall bear its own expenses associated with the taking of any deposition.

§ 956.18 Interrogatories to parties, admission of facts, and production of documents.

(a) After an answer has been filed, a party may serve on the other party written interrogatories to be answered separately in writing, signed under oath and returned within 30 days. Upon timely objection by the party, the presiding officer will determine the extent to which the interrogatories will be permitted. The scope and use of interrogatories will be controlled by § 956.17.

(b) After an answer has been filed, a party may serve upon the other party a request for the admission of specified facts. Within 30 days after service, the party served shall answer each requested fact or file objections thereto. The factual propositions set out in the request shall be deemed admitted upon the failure of a party to respond to the request for admission.

(c) Upon motion of any party showing good cause therefore, and upon notice, the presiding officer may order the other party to produce and permit the inspection and copying or photocopying of any designated documents or objects, not privileged, specifically identified, and their relevance and materiality to the cause or causes in issue explained, which are reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence. If the parties cannot themselves agree thereon, the presiding officer shall specify just terms and conditions in making the inspection and making the copies and photographs.

§ 956.19 Transcript.

Testimony and argument at hearings shall be reported verbatim, unless the presiding officer otherwise orders. Transcripts or copies of the pro-

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ceedings shall be supplied to the parties at such rates as may be fixed by contract between the reporter and the Postal Service.

§ 956.20 Proposed findings and conclusions.

(a) Each party to a proceeding, except one who fails to appear at the hearing may, unless the presiding officer orders otherwise, submit proposed findings of fact, conclusions of law and supporting reasons, either in oral or written form at the discretion of the presiding officer. The presiding officer may also require parties to any proceeding to submit proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law with supporting reasons. Unless ordered otherwise by the presiding officer, the date set for filing of proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law shall be within 15 days after the delivery of the official transcript to the Recorder who shall notify both parties of the date of its receipt. The filing date for proposed findings shall be the same for both parties. If not submitted by such date, or unless an extension of time for the filing thereof is granted, they will not be included in the record or given consideration.

(b) Proposed findings of fact shall be set forth in serially numbered paragraphs and shall state with particularity all evidentiary facts in the record with appropriate citations to the transcript or exhibits supporting the proposed findings. Each proposed conclusion shall be separately stated.

§ 956.21 Decisions.

(a) A written initial decision by an Administrative Law Judge shall be rendered with all due speed. The initial decision shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law, with the reasons therefor, upon all the material issues of fact or law presented on the record, and an appropriate order. A tentative decision shall become the final decision of the Postal Service unless exceptions are filed in accordance with § 956.22.

(b) When the Judicial Officer presides at the hearing, he shall issue a final or a tentative decision. Such decision shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law, with the reasons therefor, upon all the material issues of fact

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or law presented on the record, and an appropriate order. A tentative decision shall become the final decision of the Postal Service unless exceptions are filed in accordance with § 956.22.

§ 956.22 Exceptions to initial decision or tentative decision.

(a) A party in a proceeding presided over by an Administrative Law Judge, except a party who failed to file an answer, may appeal to the Judicial Officer by filing exceptions in a brief on appeal within 15 days from the receipt of the Administrative Law Judge's written initial decision.

(b) A party in a proceeding presided over by the Judicial Officer, except one who has failed to file an answer, may file exceptions within 15 days from the receipt of the Judicial Officer's written tentative decision.

(c) Upon receipt of the brief on appeal from an initial decision of an Administrative Law Judge, the Recorder shall promptly transmit the record to the Judicial Officer. The date for filing the reply to a brief on appeal or to a brief in support of exceptions to a tentative decision by the Judicial Officer is 10 days after the receipt thereof. No additional briefs shall be received unless requested by the Judicial Officer.

(d) Briefs on appeal or in support of exceptions and replies thereto shall be filed in quadruplicate with the Recorder and contain the following matter in the order indicated:

(1) A subject index of the matters presented, with page references; a table of cases alphabetically arranged; a list of statutes and texts cited, with page references.

(2) A concise abstract or statement of the case.

(3) Numbered exceptions to specific findings of fact or conclusions of law of the presiding officer.

(4) A concise argument clearly setting forth points of fact and of law relied upon in support of, or in opposition to, each exception taken, together with specific references to the pertinent part of the record and the legal or other authorities relied upon.

(e) Unless permission is granted by the Judicial Officer, no brief on appeal or in support of exceptions shall exceed

50 printed or 100 typewritten pages double spaced.

(f) The Judicial Officer will extend the time to file briefs only upon motion for good cause found. The movant shall be promptly notified of the Judicial Officer's decision on the motion.

§ 956.23 Judicial Officer.

The Judicial Office is authorized:

(a) To act as presiding officer at hearings;

(b) To render tentative decisions;

(c) To render final decisions of the Postal Service;

(d) To refer the record in any proceedings to the Postmaster General or the Deputy Postmaster General who will make the final decision of the Postal Service; and

(e) To revise or amend these rules of practice. In determining appeals from initial decisions or exceptions to tentative decisions, the entire official record will be considered before a final decision of the Postal Service is rendered. Before rendering a final decision of the Postal Service, the Judicial Officer may order the hearing reopened for the presentation of additional evidence by the parties.

§ 956.24 Motion for reconsideration.

Within 10 days from the date thereof, or such longer period as may be fixed by the Judicial Officer, either party may file a motion for reconsideration of the final agency decision. Each motion for reconsideration shall be accompanied by a brief clearly setting forth the points of fact and of law relied upon in support of said motion. The Judicial Officer, in his discretion, may hold a hearing on the issues raised by the motion.

§ 956.25 Modification or revocation of orders.

A party against whom an order has been issued may file an application setting forth reasons which he believes warrant the modification or revocation of the order. The Recorder shall transmit a copy of the application to the Ethical Conduct Officer who shall file a written reply. A copy of the reply shall be sent to the applicant by the Recorder. The Judicial Officer, in his discretion, may hold a hearing on the

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issues raised by the application. Thereafter an order granting or denying such application will be issued by the Judicial Officer.

§ 956.26 Computation of time.

A designated period of time under the rules of this part excludes the day the period begins and includes the last day of the period unless the last day is a Saturday or Sunday or legal holiday, in which event the period runs until the close of business on the next business day.

§ 956.27 Official record.

The transcript of testimony together with all pleadings, orders, exhibits, briefs, and other documents filed in the proceeding shall constitute the official record of the proceeding.

§ 956.28 Ex parte communications.

The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 551(14), 556(d) and 557(d) prohibiting ex parte communications are made applicable to proceedings under these rules of practice.

PART 957—RULES OF PRACTICE IN PROCEEDINGS RELATIVE TO DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION FROM CONTRACTING

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AUTHORITY: 39 U.S.C. 204, 401.

SOURCE: 36 FR 11574, June 16, 1971, unless otherwise noted.

§ 957.1 Authority for rules.

The rules in this part are issued by the Judicial Officer of the Postal Service pursuant to authority delegated by the Postmaster General (39 U.S.C. secs. 204, 401; chapter 3, section 7 of the Postal Service Purchasing Manual).

[36 FR 11574, June 16, 1971, as amended at 41 FR 19309, May 12, 1976; 63 FR 66051, Dec. 1, 1998]

§ 957.2 Scope of rules.

The rules in this part shall be applicable in all formal proceedings before the Postal Service pertaining to hearings initiated under chapter 3, section 7 of the Postal Service Purchasing Manual.

[36 FR 11574, June 16, 1971, as amended at 41 FR 19309, May 12, 1976; 63 FR 66051, Dec. 1, 1998; 67 FR 62179, Oct. 4, 2002]

§ 957.3 Definitions.

(a) The term *Vice President* means a Vice President with purchasing authority in the Postal Service or the Vice President's representative for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of chapter 3, section 7 of the Postal Service Purchasing Manual.

(b) The term *General Counsel* includes the General Counsel's authorized representative.

(c) The term *Judicial Officer* includes the Acting Judicial Officer.

(d) *Debarment* means, in general, an exclusion from Government contracting and subcontracting for a reasonable, specified period of time commensurate with the seriousness of the offense or failure, or the inadequacy of performance.

(e) *Suspension* means a disqualification from Government contracting and subcontracting for a temporary period of time because a concern or individual is suspected upon adequate evidence of engaging in criminal, fraudulent, or seriously improper conduct.