

§ 1261.414

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within a reasonable time by enforced collection proceedings. In determining the debtor's inability or refusal to pay, the following factors, among others, may be considered:

- (1) Age and health of the debtor;
- (2) Present and potential income;
- (3) Inheritance prospects;
- (4) The possibility that assets have been concealed or improperly transferred by the debtor;

(5) The availability of assets or income which may be realized by enforced collection proceedings; and

(6) The applicable exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. Uncertainty as to the price which collateral or other property will bring at forced sale may properly be considered in determining the Government's ability to enforce collection. The compromise should be for an amount which bears a reasonable relation to the amount which can be recovered by enforced collection procedures, having regard for the exemptions available to the debtor and the time which collection will take.

(d) A claim may be compromised if there is a real doubt concerning the Government's ability to prove its case in court for the full amount claimed, either because of the legal issues involved or a bona fide dispute as to the facts. The amount accepted in compromise in such cases should fairly reflect the probability of prevailing on the legal question involved, the probabilities with respect to full or partial recovery of a judgment, paying due regard to the availability of witnesses and other evidentiary support for the Government claim, and related pragmatic considerations. In determining the litigative risks involved, proportionate weight should be given to the probable amount of court costs and attorney fees pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act which may be assessed against the Government if it is unsuccessful in litigation. See 28 U.S.C. 2412.

(e) A claim may be compromised if the cost of collecting the claim does not justify the enforced collection of the full amount. The amount accepted in compromise in such cases may re-

flect an appropriate discount for the administrative and litigative costs of collection, paying heed to the time which it will take to effect collection. Costs of collecting may be a substantial factor in the settlement of small claims, but normally will not carry great weight in the settlement of large claims. In determining whether the cost of collecting justifies enforced collection of the full amount, it is legitimate to consider the positive effect that enforced collection of some claims may have on the collection of other claims. Since debtors are more likely to pay when first requested to do so if an agency has a policy of vigorous collection of all claims, the fact that the cost of collection of any one claim may exceed the amount of the claim does not necessarily mean that the claim should be compromised. The practical benefits of vigorous collection of a small claim may include a demonstration to other debtors that resistance to payment is not likely to succeed.

(f) *Enforcement policy.* Statutory penalties, forfeitures, or debts established as an aid to enforcement and to compel compliance may be compromised pursuant to this part if the agency's enforcement policy in terms of deterrence and securing compliance, both present and future, will be adequately served by acceptance of the sum to be agreed upon. Mere accidental or technical violations may be dealt with less severely than willful and substantial violations.

(g) Compromises payable in installments are to be discouraged. However, if payment of a compromise by installments is necessary, a legally enforceable agreement for the reinstatement of the prior indebtedness less sums paid thereon and acceleration of the balance due upon default in the payment of any installment should be obtained, together with security in the manner set forth in §1261.411, in every case in which this is possible.

(h) If the agency's files do not contain reasonably up-to-date credit information as a basis for assessing a compromise proposal, such information may be obtained from the individual debtor by obtaining a statement executed under penalty of perjury showing

the debtor's assets and liabilities, income, and expenses. Forms such as Department of Justice Form OBD-500 or OBD-500B may be used for this purpose. Similar data may be obtained from corporate debtors using a form such as Department of Justice Form OBD-500C or by resort to balance sheets and such additional data as seems required. Samples of the Department of Justice forms are available from the Office of the NASA General Counsel. Neither a percentage of a debtor's profits nor stock in a debtor corporation will be accepted in compromise of a claim. In negotiating a compromise with a business concern, consideration should be given to requiring a waiver of the tax-loss-carry-back rights of the debtor.

(i) *Joint and several liability.* When two or more debtors are jointly and severally liable, collection action will not be withheld against one such debtor until the other or others pay their proportionate shares. NASA will not attempt to allocate the burden of paying such claims as between the debtors but will proceed to liquidate the indebtedness as quickly as possible. Care should be taken that a compromise agreement with one such debtor does not release the agency's claim against the remaining debtors. The amount of a compromise with one such debtor shall not be considered a precedent or as morally binding in determining the amount which will be required from other debtors jointly and severally liable on the claim.

§ 1261.415 Execution of releases.

Upon receipt of full payment of a claim, or the amount in compromise of a claim as determined pursuant to § 1261.414, the official designated in § 1261.402 will prepare and execute, on behalf of the United States, an appropriate release, which shall include the provision that it shall be void if procured by fraud, misrepresentation, the presentation of a false claim, or mutual mistake of fact.

§ 1261.416 Suspending or terminating collection action.

(a) The standards set forth in this section apply to the suspension or termination of collection action pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3711(a)(3) on claims which

do not exceed \$20,000, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, after deducting the amount of partial payments or collections, if any. NASA may suspend or terminate collection action under this part with respect to claims for money or property arising out of activities of the agency, prior to the referral of such claims to the General Accounting Office or to the Department of Justice for litigation. The Comptroller General (or designee) may exercise such authority with respect to claims referred to the General Accounting Office prior to their further referral for litigation.

(b) If, after deducting the amount of partial payments or collections, if any, a claim exceeds \$20,000, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, the authority to suspend or terminate rests solely with the Department of Justice. If the designated official believes suspension or termination may be appropriate, the matter should be evaluated using the factors set forth in paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section. If the agency concludes that suspension or termination is appropriate, it must refer the matter, with its reasons for the recommendation, to the Department of Justice, using the Claims Collection Litigation Report. See § 1261.417(e) or 4 CFR 105.2(b). If NASA decides not to suspend or terminate collection action on the claim, Department of Justice approval is not required; or if it determines that its claim is plainly erroneous or clearly without legal merit, it may terminate collection action regardless of the amount involved, without the need for Department of Justice concurrence.

(c) *Suspension of collection activity—(1) Inability to locate debtor.* Collection action may be suspended temporarily on a claim when the debtor cannot be located after diligent effort and there is reason to believe that future collection action may be sufficiently productive to justify periodic review and action on the claim, with due consideration for the size and amount which may be realized thereon. The following sources may be of assistance in locating missing debtors: Telephone directories; city directories; postmasters; drivers' license records; automobile title and registration records; state and local

government agencies; the Internal Revenue Service (see 4 CFR 102.18); other Federal agencies; employers, relatives, friends; credit agency skip locate reports, and credit bureaus. Suspension as to a particular debtor should not defer the early liquidation of security for the debt. Every reasonable effort should be made to locate missing debtors sufficiently in advance of the bar of the applicable statute of limitations, such as 28 U.S.C. 2415, to permit the timely filing of suit if such action is warranted. If the missing debtor has signed a confess-judgment note and is in default, referral of the note for the entry of judgment should not be delayed because of the debtor's missing status.

(2) *Financial condition of debtor.* Collection action may also be suspended temporarily on a claim when the debtor owns no substantial equity in realty or personal property and is unable to make payments on the Government's claim or effect a compromise at the time, but the debtor's future prospects justify retention of the claim for periodic review and action, and:

(i) The applicable statute of limitations has been tolled or started running anew; or

(ii) Future collection can be effected by offset, notwithstanding the statute of limitations, with due regard to the 10-year limitation prescribed by 31 U.S.C. 3716(c)(1); or

(iii) The debtor agrees to pay interest on the amount of the debt on which collection action will be temporarily suspended, and such temporary suspension is likely to enhance the debtor's ability to fully pay the principle amount of the debt with interest at a later date.

(3) Request for waiver or administrative review. If the statute under which waiver or administrative review is sought is "mandatory," that is, if it prohibits the agency from collecting the debt prior to the agency's consideration of the request for waiver or review (see *Califano v. Yamasaki*, 422 U.S. 682 (1979)), then collection action must be suspended until either: The agency has considered the request for waiver/review; or the applicable time limit for making the waiver/review request, as prescribed in a written notice, has ex-

pired and the debtor, upon notice, has not made such a request. If the applicable waiver/review statute is "permissive," that is, if it does not require all requests for waiver/review to be considered, and if it does not prohibit collection action pending consideration of a waiver/request (for example, 5 U.S.C. 5584), collection action may be suspended pending agency action on a waiver/review request based upon appropriate consideration, on a case-by-case basis, as to whether:

(i) There is a reasonable possibility that waiver will be granted or that the debt (in whole or in part) will be found not owing from the debtor;

(ii) The Government's interests would be protected, if suspension were granted, by reasonable assurance that the debt could be recovered if the debtor does not prevail; and

(iii) Collection of the debt will cause undue hardship.

(4) If the applicable statutes and regulations would not authorize refund by the agency to the debtor of amounts collected prior to agency consideration of the debtor's waiver/review request (in the event the agency acts favorably on it), collection action should ordinarily be suspended, without regard to the factors specified for permissive waivers, unless it appears clear, based on the request and the surrounding circumstances, that the request is frivolous and was made primarily to delay collection. See 4 CFR 104.2.

(d) *Termination of collection activity.* Collection activity may be terminated and NASA may close its file on the claim based on the following:

(1) Inability to collect any substantial amount. Collection action may be terminated on a claim when it becomes clear that the Government cannot collect or enforce collection of any significant sum from the debtor, having due regard for the judicial remedies available to the Government, the debtor's future financial prospects, and the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law. In determining the debtor's inability to pay, the following factors, among others, may be considered: Age and health of the debtor; present and potential income; inheritance prospects; the possibility

that assets have been concealed or improperly transferred by the debtor; the availability of assets or income which may be realized by enforced collection proceedings.

(2) *Inability to locate debtor.* Collection action may be terminated on a claim when the debtor cannot be located, and either:

(i) There is no security remaining to be liquidated; or

(ii) The applicable statute of limitations has run and the prospects of collecting by offset, notwithstanding the bar of the statute of limitations, are too remote to justify retention of the claim.

(3) *Cost will exceed recovery.* Collection action may be terminated on a claim when it is likely that the cost of further collection action will exceed the amount recoverable thereby.

(4) *Claim legally without merit.* Collection action should be terminated immediately on a claim whenever it is determined that the claim is legally without merit.

(5) *Claim cannot be substantiated by evidence.* Collection action should be terminated when it is determined that the evidence necessary to prove the claim cannot be produced or the necessary witnesses are unavailable and efforts to reduce voluntary payment are unavailing.

(e) *Transfer of claim.* When NASA has doubt as to whether collection action should be suspended or terminated on a claim, it may refer the claim to the General Accounting Office for advice. When a significant enforcement policy is involved in reducing a statutory penalty or forfeiture to judgment, or recovery of a judgment is a prerequisite to the imposition of administrative sanctions, such as the suspension or revocation of a license or the privilege of participating in a Government sponsored program, NASA may refer such a claim for litigation even though termination of collection activity might otherwise be given consideration under paragraphs (d)(1) and (2) of this section. Claims on which NASA holds a judgment by assignment or otherwise will be referred to the Department of Justice for further action if renewal of the judgment lien or enforced collection

proceedings are justified under the criteria discussed in this section.

§ 1261.417 Referral to Department of Justice (DJ) or General Accounting Office (GAO).

(a) *Prompt referral.* Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, claims on which aggressive collection action has been taken in accordance with §1261.406 and which cannot be compromised, or on which collection action cannot be suspended or terminated, in accordance with §§1261.414 and 1261.416, shall be promptly referred to the Department of Justice for litigation.

(1) Claims for which the gross original amount is over \$200,000 shall be referred to the Commercial Litigation Branch, Civil Division, Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.

(2) Claims for which the gross original amount is \$200,000 or less shall be referred to the United States Attorney in whose judicial district the debtor can be found. Referrals should be made as early as possible, consistent with aggressive agency collection action and the observance of the regulations contained in this subpart, and in any event, well within the period for bringing a timely suit against the debtor. Ordinarily, referrals should be made within 1 year of the agency's final determination of the fact and the amount of the debt.

(3) *Minimum amount.* NASA is not to refer claims of less than \$600, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, for litigation unless:

(i) Referral is important to a significant enforcement policy; or

(ii) The debtor not only has the clear ability to pay the claim but the Government can effectively enforce payment, having due regard for the exemptions available to the debtor under State and Federal law and the judicial remedies available to the Government.

(b) Claims arising from audit exceptions taken by the GAO to payments made by agencies must be referred to the GAO for review and approval prior to referral to the Department of Justice for litigation, unless NASA has been granted an exception by the GAO. Referrals shall comply with instructions, including monetary limitations,