

§ 16.4

(b) *Agency records.* (1) In considering the validity of a grievance, the Grievance Board shall have access, to the extent permitted by law, to any agency record considered by the Board to be relevant to the grievant and the subject matter of the grievance.

(2) The agency shall, subject to applicable law, promptly furnish the grievant any agency record which the grievant requests to substantiate the grievance and which the agency or the Grievance Board determines is relevant and material to the proceeding. When deemed appropriate by the agency or the Board, a grievant may be supplied with only a summary or extract of classified material. If a request by a grievant for a document is denied prior to or during the agency's consideration of a grievance, such denial may be raised by the grievant as an integral part of the grievance before the Board.

(3) These regulations do not require disclosure of any official agency record to the Grievance Board or a grievant where the head of agency or deputy determines in writing that such disclosure would adversely affect the foreign policy or national security of the United States.

§ 16.4 Time limits for grievance filing.

(a) A grievance concerning a continuing practice or condition may be presented at any time if its adverse effect is presently continuing. Documents contained in official employee personnel files, for example, shall be deemed to constitute a continuing condition.

(b) Subject to paragraph (a) of this section, a grievance under these regulations is forever barred, and the Grievance Board shall not consider or resolve the grievance, unless the grievance is presented within a period of 3 years after the occurrence or occurrences giving rise to the grievance, except that if the grievance arose earlier than 2 years prior to the effective date of these regulations, the grievance shall be so barred, and no considered and resolved, unless it is presented within a period of 2 years after the effective date of these regulations. There shall be excluded from the computation of any such period any time during which the grievant was unaware of

22 CFR Ch. I (4-1-03 Edition)

the grounds which are the basis of the grievance and could not have discovered such grounds if the grievant had exercised, as determined by the Grievance Board, reasonable diligence.

(c) A grievance shall be deemed presented to the responsible official (§16.7(b)), transmitted to post or bureau (§16.7(c)) submitted for agency review (§16.8) or filed with the Grievance Board §16.11(a):

(1) On the date of its dispatch by telegram, registered or certified mail, or receipted mail, in a diplomatic pouch;

(2) On the date of its arrival at the appropriate office, if delivered by any other means.

§ 16.5 Relationship to other remedies.

(a) A grievant may not file a grievance under these procedures if the grievant has formally requested, prior to filing a grievance, that the matter or matters which are the basis of the grievance be considered or resolved and relief be provided, under another provision of law, regulation, or executive order, and the matter has been carried to final decision thereunder on its merits or is still under consideration.

(b) If a grievant is not prohibited from filing a grievance under these regulations by paragraph (a) of this section, the grievant may file under these regulations notwithstanding the fact that such grievance may be eligible for consideration, resolution, and relief under a regulation or executive order other than under these regulations, but such election of remedies shall be final upon the acceptance of jurisdiction by the Board.

§ 16.6 Security clearances.

The agencies shall use their best endeavors to expedite security clearances whenever necessary to ensure a fair and prompt investigation and hearing.

§ 16.7 Agency procedures.

(a) *Initial consideration.* (1) Grievances shall be considered through the steps provided in this section before they are filed with the Grievance Board.

(2) During the pendency of agency procedures under this section, the grievant may request a suspension of the proposed action of the character of

Department of State

§ 16.8

separation or termination of the grievant, disciplinary action against the grievant, or recovery from the grievant of alleged overpayment of salary, expenses or allowances, which is related to the grievance. The request must be in writing and addressed to the responsible official of the agencies, as designated in § 16.8(a)(2) stating the reasons for such suspension. If the request is related to separation or termination of the grievant, and the agency considers that the grievance is not frivolous and is integral to the proposed action, the agency shall suspend its proposed action until completion of agency procedures, and for a period thereafter if necessary, consistent with paragraph (a) of § 16.11, to permit the grievant to file a grievance with the Board, and to request interim relief under paragraph (c) of § 16.11. If a request is denied, the agency shall provide the grievant in writing the reason for denial. Nothing in these regulations shall be deemed to preclude an employee from requesting the suspension of any proposed action.

(b) *Consideration by responsible officer.*

(1) While every effort should be made to resolve a complaint by an initial discussion between an employee and the supervisor or responsible officer, an employee may present the complaint as a grievance by submitting it in writing, to that person. (The term "responsible officer" as used herein includes any appropriate officer who has immediate jurisdiction over the complaint.) The presentation shall include a description of the act or condition which is the subject of the grievance; its effect on the grievant; any provision of law, regulation, or agency policy which the grievant may believe was violated or misapplied; any documentary evidence readily available to the grievant on which the grievance rests; the identity of individuals having knowledge of relevant facts; and a statement of the remedial action requested.

(2) The responsible officer, whenever possible, shall use independent judgment in deciding whether the grievance is meritorious and what the resolution of it should be. Within 15 days from receipt of the written grievance, the responsible officer shall provide the

grievant with a written response, which shall include a statement of any proposed resolution of the grievance.

(3) If the response denies in whole or in part the remedial action requested, such response shall notify the grievant of the time within which to appeal the decision, and identity of the senior official, or designee, to whom the appeal should be addressed. In those cases in which the senior official, or designee, is the responsible officer to whom the grievance was initially presented or has participated in the decision process and has formally approved the written response of the responsible officer, the grievant shall be so notified and advised that the grievance may be submitted directly to the agency for review under § 16.8.

(c) *Bureau or post review.* (1) If the responsible officer's written response does not resolve the grievance to the grievant's satisfaction, within 10 days of receiving it (or, if no response is received, within 25 days after first presenting the grievance), the grievant may pursue the grievance by transmitting it in writing to the senior official, or the designee in the bureau or post which has authority to resolve the grievance. The written transmission shall include all the information required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section and copies of any correspondence under paragraphs (b) (2) and (3) of this section.

(2) Within 15 days from receipt of the grievance that official shall provide the grievant with a written decision, including any proposed resolution of the grievance. If the decision denies in whole or in part the remedial action requested, the communication shall notify the grievant of the time within which to submit the grievance for agency review and the identity of the appropriate agency official to whom the grievance should be addressed.

§ 16.8 Agency review.

(a) *Submission.* (1) An employee may submit the grievance for agency review if the grievance (i) is not within the jurisdiction of a post or bureau, or (ii) the grievance has been considered but