

has discriminated against the complainant in violation of the Act.

(1) If the Assistant Secretary concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that a violation has occurred, he or she shall accompany the findings with a preliminary order providing relief to the complainant. The preliminary order shall include all relief necessary to make the employee whole, including, where appropriate: reinstatement with the same seniority status that the employee would have had but for the discrimination; back pay with interest; and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees. Where the named person establishes that the complainant is a security risk (whether or not the information is obtained after the complainant's discharge), a preliminary order of reinstatement would not be appropriate.

(2) If the Assistant Secretary concludes that a violation has not occurred, the Assistant Secretary will notify the parties of that finding.

(b) The findings and the preliminary order will be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to all parties of record. The letter accompanying the findings and order will inform the parties of their right to file objections and to request a hearing, and of the right of the named person to request attorney's fees from the ALJ, regardless of whether the named person has filed objections, if the named person alleges that the complaint was frivolous or brought in bad faith. The letter also will give the address of the Chief Administrative Law Judge. At the same time, the Assistant Secretary will file with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S. Department of Labor, a copy of the original complaint and a copy of the findings and order.

(c) The findings and preliminary order will be effective 30 days after receipt by the named person pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section, unless an objection and a request for a hearing has been filed as provided at § 1980.106. However, the portion of any preliminary order requiring reinstatement will be effective immediately upon re-

ceipt of the findings and preliminary order.

Subpart B—Litigation

§ 1980.106 Objections to the findings and the preliminary order and request for a hearing.

(a) Any party who desires review, including judicial review, of the findings and preliminary order, or a named person alleging that the complaint was frivolous or brought in bad faith who seeks an award of attorney's fees, must file any objections and/or a request for a hearing on the record within 30 days of receipt of the findings and preliminary order pursuant to paragraph (b) of § 1980.105. The objection or request for attorney's fees and request for a hearing must be in writing and state whether the objection is to the findings, the preliminary order, and/or whether there should be an award of attorney's fees. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, or e-mail communication will be considered to be the date of filing; if the objection is filed in person, by hand-delivery or other means, the objection is filed upon receipt. Objections must be filed with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20001, and copies of the objections must be mailed at the same time to the other parties of record, the OSHA official who issued the findings and order, and the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210.

(b)(1) If a timely objection is filed, all provisions of the preliminary order will be stayed, except for the portion requiring preliminary reinstatement, which shall not be automatically stayed. The portion of the preliminary order requiring reinstatement will be effective immediately upon the named person's receipt of the findings and preliminary order, regardless of any objections to the order. The named person may file a motion with the Office of Administrative Law Judges for a stay of the Assistant Secretary's preliminary order of reinstatement.

(2) If no timely objection is filed with respect to either the findings or the preliminary order, the findings or preliminary order, as the case may be,

shall become the final decision of the Secretary, not subject to judicial review.

§ 1980.107 Hearings.

(a) Except as provided in this part, proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the rules of practice and procedure for administrative hearings before the Office of Administrative Law Judges, codified at subpart A, part 18 of title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(b) Upon receipt of an objection and request for hearing, the Chief Administrative Law Judge will promptly assign the case to a judge who will notify the parties, by certified mail, of the day, time, and place of hearing. The hearing is to commence expeditiously, except upon a showing of good cause or unless otherwise agreed to by the parties. Hearings will be conducted *de novo*, on the record. Administrative law judges have broad discretion to limit discovery in order to expedite the hearing.

(c) If both the complainant and the named person object to the findings and/or order, the objections will be consolidated and a single hearing will be conducted.

(d) Formal rules of evidence will not apply, but rules or principles designed to assure production of the most probative evidence will be applied. The administrative law judge may exclude evidence that is immaterial, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious.

§ 1980.108 Role of Federal agencies.

(a)(1) The complainant and the named person will be parties in every proceeding. At the Assistant Secretary's discretion, the Assistant Secretary may participate as a party or as *amicus curiae* at any time at any stage of the proceedings. This right to participate includes, but is not limited to, the right to petition for review of a decision of an administrative law judge, including a decision approving or rejecting a settlement agreement between the complainant and the named person.

(2) Copies of pleadings in all cases, whether or not the Assistant Secretary is participating in the proceeding, must be sent to the Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health

Administration, and to the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210.

(b) The Securities and Exchange Commission may participate as *amicus curiae* at any time in the proceedings, at the Commission's discretion. At the request of the Securities and Exchange Commission, copies of all pleadings in a case must be sent to the Commission, whether or not the Commission is participating in the proceeding.

§ 1980.109 Decision and orders of the administrative law judge.

(a) The decision of the administrative law judge will contain appropriate findings, conclusions, and an order pertaining to the remedies provided in paragraph (b) of this section, as appropriate. A determination that a violation has occurred may only be made if the complainant has demonstrated that protected behavior or conduct was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint. Relief may not be ordered if the named person demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of any protected behavior. Neither the Assistant Secretary's determination to dismiss a complaint without completing an investigation pursuant to § 1980.104(b) nor the Assistant Secretary's determination to proceed with an investigation is subject to review by the administrative law judge, and a complaint may not be remanded for the completion of an investigation or for additional findings on the basis that a determination to dismiss was made in error. Rather, if there otherwise is jurisdiction, the administrative law judge will hear the case on the merits.

(b) If the administrative law judge concludes that the party charged has violated the law, the order will provide all relief necessary to make the employee whole, including reinstatement of the complainant to that person's former position with the seniority status that the complainant would have had but for the discrimination, back pay with interest, and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including