

failure to file a timely answer based solely on the record before the ALJ.

(l) If the authority head decides that extraordinary circumstances excused the defendant's failure to file a timely answer, the authority head shall remand the case to the ALJ with instructions to grant the defendant an opportunity to answer.

(m) If the authority head decides that the defendant's failure to file a timely answer is not excused, the authority head shall reinstate the initial decision of the ALJ, which shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after the authority head issues such decision.

**§ 2554.15 What happens once an answer is filed?**

(a) When the reviewing official receives an answer, he must file concurrently, the complaint and the answer with the ALJ, along with a designation of a Corporation representative.

(b) When the ALJ receives the complaint and the answer, the ALJ will promptly serve a notice of oral hearing upon the defendant and the representative for the Corporation, in the same manner as the complaint, service of which is described in § 2554.12. The notice of oral hearing must be served within six years of the date on which the claim or statement is made.

(c) The notice must include:

(1) The tentative time, place and nature of the hearing;

(2) The legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) The matters of fact and law to be asserted;

(4) A description of the procedures for the conduct of the hearing;

(5) The name, address, and telephone number of the defendant's representative and the representative for the Corporation; and

(6) Such other matters as the ALJ deems appropriate.

(d) The six-year statute of limitation may be extended by agreement of the parties.

HEARING PROVISIONS

**§ 2554.16 What kind of hearing is contemplated?**

The hearing is a formal proceeding conducted by the ALJ during which a defendant will have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, present testimony, and dispute liability.

**§ 2554.17 At the hearing, what rights do the parties have?**

(a) The parties to the hearing shall be the defendant and the Corporation. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3730(c)(5), a private plaintiff in an action under the False Claims Act may participate in the hearing to the extent authorized by the provisions of that Act.

(b) Each party has the right to:

(1) Be represented by a representative;

(2) Request a pre-hearing conference and participate in any conference held by the ALJ;

(3) Conduct discovery;

(4) Agree to stipulations of fact or law which will be made a part of the record;

(5) Present evidence relevant to the issues at the hearing;

(6) Present and cross-examine witnesses;

(7) Present arguments at the hearing as permitted by the ALJ; and

(8) Submit written briefs and proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law after the hearing, as permitted by the ALJ.

**§ 2554.18 What is the role of the ALJ?**

An ALJ retained by the Corporation serves as the presiding officer at all hearings.

(a) The ALJ shall conduct a fair and impartial hearing, avoid delay, maintain order, and assure that a record of the proceeding is made.

(b) The ALJ has the authority to—

(1) Set and change the date, time, and place of the hearing upon reasonable notice to the parties;

(2) Continue or recess the hearing in whole or in part for a reasonable period of time;

(3) Hold conferences to identify or simplify the issues, or to consider other matters that may aid in the expeditious disposition of the proceeding;

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- (4) Administer oaths and affirmations;
  - (5) Issue subpoenas requiring the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents at depositions or at hearings;
  - (6) Rule on motions and other procedural matters;
  - (7) Regulate the scope and timing of discovery;
  - (8) Regulate the course of the hearing and the conduct of representatives and parties;
  - (9) Examine witnesses;
  - (10) Receive, rule on, exclude, or limit evidence;
  - (11) Upon motion of a party, take official notice of facts;
  - (12) Upon motion of a party, decide cases, in whole or in part, by summary judgment where there is no disputed issue of material fact;
  - (13) Conduct any conference, argument, or hearing on motions in person or by telephone; and
  - (14) Exercise such other authority as is necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the ALJ under this part.
- (c) The ALJ does not have the authority to find Federal statutes or regulations invalid.

#### § 2554.19 Can the reviewing official or ALJ be disqualified?

- (a) A reviewing official or an ALJ may disqualify himself or herself at any time.
- (b) Upon motion of any party, the reviewing official or ALJ may be disqualified as follows:
  - (1) The motion must be supported by an affidavit containing specific facts establishing that personal bias or other reason for disqualification exists, including the time and circumstances of the discovery of such facts;
  - (2) The motion must be filed promptly after discovery of the grounds for disqualification, or the objection will be deemed waived; and
  - (3) The party, or representative of record, must certify in writing that the motion is made in good faith.
- (c) Once a motion has been filed to disqualify the reviewing official, the ALJ will halt the proceedings until resolving the matter of disqualification. If the ALJ determines that the reviewing official is disqualified, the ALJ will

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dismiss the complaint without prejudice. If the ALJ disqualifies himself or herself, the case will be promptly reassigned to another ALJ.

#### § 2554.20 How are issues brought to the attention of the ALJ?

- (a) All applications to the ALJ for an order or ruling shall be by motion. Motions shall state the relief sought, the authority relied upon, and the facts alleged, and shall be filed with the ALJ and served on all other parties.
- (b) Except for motions made during a prehearing conference or at the hearing, all motions shall be in writing. The ALJ may require that oral motions be reduced to writing.
- (c) Within 15 days after a written motion is served, or such other time as may be fixed by the ALJ, any party may file a response to such motion.
- (d) The ALJ may not grant a written motion before the time for filing responses thereto has expired, except upon consent of the parties or following a hearing on the motion, but may overrule or deny such motion without awaiting a response.
- (e) The ALJ shall make a reasonable effort to dispose of all outstanding motions prior to the beginning of the hearing.

#### § 2554.21 How are papers served?

- (a) *Form.* (1) Documents filed with the ALJ shall include an original and two copies.
- (2) Every pleading and paper filed in the proceeding shall contain a caption setting forth the title of the action, the case number assigned by the ALJ, and a designation of the paper (e.g., motion to quash subpoena).
- (3) Every pleading and paper shall be signed by, and shall contain the address and telephone number of the party or the person on whose behalf the paper was filed, or his or her representative.
- (4) Papers are considered filed when they are mailed. Date of mailing may be established by a certificate from the party or its representative or by proof that the document was sent by certified or registered mail.
- (b) *Service.* A party filing a document with the ALJ shall at the time of filing, serve a copy of such document on