

Merit Systems Protection Board

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(11) Any other significant change in duties, responsibilities, or working conditions.

(b) *Whistleblowing* is the disclosure of information by an employee, former employee, or applicant that the individual reasonably believes evidences a violation of law, rule, or regulation, gross mismanagement, gross waste of funds, abuse of authority, or substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. It does not include a disclosure that is specifically prohibited by law or required by Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign affairs, unless such information is disclosed to the Special Counsel, the Inspector General of an agency, or an employee designated by the head of the agency to receive it.

(c) *Contributing factor* means any disclosure that affects an agency's decision to threaten, propose, take, or not take a personnel action with respect to the individual making the disclosure.

(d) *Clear and convincing evidence* is that measure or degree of proof that produces in the mind of the trier of fact a firm belief as to the allegations sought to be established. It is a higher standard than "preponderance of the evidence" as defined in 5 CFR 1201.56(c)(2).

[55 FR 28592, July 12, 1990, as amended at 62 FR 17048, Apr. 9, 1997]

Subpart B—Appeals

§ 1209.5 Time of filing.

(a) *Individual right of action appeals.* The appellant must seek corrective action from the Special Counsel before appealing to the Board. Where the appellant has sought corrective action, the time limit for filing an appeal with the Board is governed by 5 U.S.C. 1214(a)(3). Under that section, an appeal must be filed:

(1) No later than 65 days after the date of issuance of the Office of Special Counsel's written notification to the appellant that it was terminating its investigation of the appellant's allegations or, if the appellant shows that the Special Counsel's notification was received more than 5 days after the date of issuance, within 60 days after

the date the appellant received the Special Counsel's notification; or,

(2) If the Office of Special Counsel has not notified the appellant that it will seek corrective action on the appellant's behalf within 120 days of the date of filing of the request for corrective action, at any time after the expiration of 120 days.

(b) *Otherwise appealable action appeals.* The appellant may choose either to seek corrective action from the Special Counsel before appealing to the Board or to file the appeal directly with the Board. If the appellant seeks corrective action from the Special Counsel, the time limit for appealing is governed by paragraph (a) of this section. If the appellant appeals directly to the Board, the time limit for filing is governed by 5 CFR 1201.22(b).

(c) *Appeals after a stay request.* Where an appellant has filed a request for a stay with the Board without first filing an appeal of the action, the appeal must be filed within 30 days after the date the appellant receives the order ruling on the stay request. Failure to timely file the appeal will result in the termination of any stay that has been granted unless a good reason for the delay is shown.

[55 FR 28592, July 12, 1990, as amended at 59 FR 31110, June 17, 1994; 62 FR 59993, Nov. 6, 1997]

§ 1209.6 Content of appeal; right to hearing.

(a) *Content.* Only an appellant, his or her designated representative, or a party properly substituted under 5 CFR 1201.35 may file an appeal. Appeals may be in any format, including letter form, but must contain the following:

(1) The nine (9) items or types of information required in 5 CFR 1201.24 (a)(1) through (a)(9);

(2) Where the appellant first sought corrective action from the Special Counsel, evidence that the appeal is timely filed;

(3) The name(s) and position(s) held by the employee(s) who took the action(s), and a chronology of facts concerning the action(s);

(4) A description of each disclosure evidencing whistleblowing as defined in § 1209.4(b) of this part; and

(5) Evidence or argument that:

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(i) The appellant was or will be subject to a personnel action as defined in § 1209.4(a) of this part, or that the agency has threatened to take or not to take such a personnel action, together with specific indications giving rise to the appellant's apprehensions; and

(ii) The personnel action was or will be based wholly or in part on the whistleblowing disclosure, as described in § 1209.4(b) of this part.

(6) An appellant who first sought corrective action from the Special Counsel may satisfy the requirements of paragraphs (a)(3) through (a)(5) of this section by filing with the appeal a copy of *Part 2: Reprisal For Whistleblowing* of the complaint form submitted to the Office of Special Counsel (Form OSC-11, *Complaint of Possible Prohibited Personnel Practice or Other Prohibited Activity*, Rev. 8/00), together with a copy of any continuation sheet with answers to Part 2 questions filed with the Office of Special Counsel, and any supplement to Part 2 of the original complaint filed with the Office of Special Counsel or completed by the Office of Special Counsel and furnished to the appellant.

(b) *Right to hearing.* An appellant has a right to a hearing.

(c) *Timely request.* The appellant must submit any request for a hearing with the appeal, or within any other time period the judge sets for that purpose. If the appellant does not make a timely request for a hearing, the right to a hearing is waived.

(d) *Electronic filing.* An appeal may be filed electronically by using the Board's e-Appeal site (<https://e-appeal.mspb.gov>) in accordance with § 1201.14 of this chapter.

[55 FR 28592, July 12, 1990, as amended at 65 FR 67608, Nov. 13, 2000; 68 FR 59865, Oct. 20, 2003; 69 FR 57631, Sept. 27, 2004]

§ 1209.7 Burden and degree of proof.

(a) Subject to the exception stated in paragraph (b) of this section, in any case involving a prohibited personnel practice described in 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(8), the Board will order appropriate corrective action if the appellant shows by a preponderance of the evidence that a disclosure described under 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(8) was a contributing factor in the personnel action that was threat-

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ened, proposed, taken, or not taken against the appellant.

(b) However, even where the appellant meets the burden stated in paragraph (a) of this section, the Board will not order corrective action if the agency shows by clear and convincing evidence that it would have threatened, proposed, taken, or not taken the same personnel action in the absence of the disclosure.

Subpart C—Stay Requests

§ 1209.8 Filing a request for a stay.

(a) *Time of filing.* An appellant may request a stay of a personnel action allegedly based on whistleblowing at any time after the appellant becomes eligible to file an appeal with the Board under § 1209.5 of this part, but no later than the time limit set for the close of discovery in the appeal. The request may be filed prior to, simultaneous with, or after the filing of an appeal.

(b) *Place of filing.* Requests must be filed with the appropriate Board regional or field office as set forth in 5 CFR 1201.4(d).

(c) *Service of stay request.* A stay request must be simultaneously served upon the Board's regional or field office and upon the agency's local servicing personnel office or the agency's designated representative, if any. A certificate of service stating how and when service was made must accompany the stay request.

(d) *Method of filing.* A stay request must be filed with the appropriate Board regional or field office by mail, by facsimile, by commercial or personal delivery, or by electronic filing in accordance with § 1201.14 of this chapter.

[55 FR 28592, July 12, 1990, as amended at 58 FR 36345, July 7, 1993, 59 FR 65243, Dec. 19, 1994; 68 FR 59865, Oct. 20, 2003; 69 FR 57631, Sept. 27, 2004]

§ 1209.9 Content of stay request and response.

(a) Only an appellant, his or her designated representative, or a party properly substituted under 5 CFR 1201.35 may file a stay request. The request may be in any format, and must contain the following: