

**RULES OF PRACTICE GOVERNING
PROCEEDINGS ON PETITIONS TO
MODIFY OR TO BE EXEMPTED
FROM MARKETING ORDERS**



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TITLE 7—AGRICULTURE

**SUBTITLE B—REGULATIONS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**CHAPTER IX—AGRICULTURAL
MARKETING SERVICE
(MARKETING AGREEMENTS AND
ORDERS; FRUITS, VEGETABLES, NUTS),
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

PART 900—GENERAL REGULATIONS

**SUBPART—RULES OF PRACTICE GOVERNING
PROCEEDINGS ON PETITIONS TO MODIFY OR
TO BE EXEMPTED FROM MARKETING ORDERS**

AUTHORITY: 7 U.S.C. 608c.

§ 900.50 Words in the singular form.

Words in this subpart in the singular form shall be deemed to import the plural, and vice versa, as the case may demand.

§ 900.51 Definitions.

As used in this subpart, the terms as defined in the act shall apply with equal force and effect. In addition, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) The term *act* means Public Act No. 10, 73d Congress, as amended and as reenacted and amended by the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. and Sup. 601);

(b) The term *Department* means the United States Department of Agriculture;

(c) The term *Secretary* means the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States, or any officer or employee of the Department to whom authority has heretofore been delegated, or to whom authority may hereafter be delegated, to act for the Secretary;

(d) The term *judge* means any Administrative Law Judge, appointed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3105, and assigned to the proceeding involved;

(e) The term *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service or any officer or employee of the Department to whom authority has been delegated or may hereafter be delegated to act for the Administrator.

(f) [Reserved]

(g) The term FEDERAL REGISTER means the publication provided for by the act of July 26, 1935 (49 Stat. 500), and acts supplementary thereto and amendatory thereof;

(h) The term *marketing order* means any order or any amendment thereto which may be issued pursuant to section 8c of the act;

(i) The term *handler* means any person who, by the terms of a marketing order, is subject thereto, or to whom a marketing order is sought to be made applicable;

(j) The term *proceeding* means a proceeding before the Secretary arising under section 8c(15)(A) of the Act.

(k) The term *hearing* means that part of the proceeding which involves the submission of evidence;

(l) The term *party* includes the Department;

(m) The term *hearing clerk* means the hearing clerk, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.;

(n) [Reserved]

(o) The term *decision* means the judge's initial decision in proceedings subject to 5 U.S.C. 556 and 557, and includes the judge's (1) findings of fact and conclusions with respect to all material issues of fact, law or discretion as well as the reasons or basis thereof, (2) order, and (3) rulings on findings, conclusions and orders submitted by the parties;

(p) The term *petition* includes an amended petition.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 26 FR 7796, Aug. 22, 1961; 28 FR 579, Jan. 23, 1963; 37 FR 8059, Apr. 25, 1972; 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.52 Institution of proceeding.

(a) *Filing and service of petition.* Any handler desiring to complain that any marketing order or any provision of any such order or any obligation imposed in connection therewith is not in accordance with law, shall file with the hearing clerk, in quadruplicate, a petition in writing addressed to the Secretary. Promptly upon receipt of the petition, the hearing clerk shall transmit a true copy thereof to the Administrator and the General Counsel, respectively.

(b) *Contents of petition.* A petition shall contain:

(1) The correct name, address, and principal place of business of the petitioner. If petitioner is a corporation, such fact shall be stated, together with the name of the State of incorporation, the date of incorporation, and the names, addresses, and respective positions held by its officers; if an unincorporated association, the names and addresses of its officers, and the respective positions held by them; if a partnership, the name and address of each partner;

(2) Reference to the specific terms or provisions of the marketing order, or the interpretation or application thereof, which are complained of;

(3) A full statement of the facts (avoiding a mere repetition of detailed evidence) upon which the petition is based, and which it is desired that the Secretary consider, setting forth clearly and concisely the nature of the petitioner's business and the manner in which petitioner claims to be affected by the terms or provisions of the marketing order, or the interpretation or application thereof, which are complained of;

(4) A statement of the grounds on which the terms or provisions of the marketing order, or the interpretation or application thereof, which are complained of, are challenged as not in accordance with law;

(5) Prayers for the specific relief which the petitioner desires the Secretary to grant;

(6) An affidavit by the petitioner, or, if the petitioner is not an individual, by an officer of the

petitioner having knowledge of the facts stated in the petition, verifying the petition and stating that it is filed in good faith and not for purposes of delay.

(c) *Motion to dismiss petition*—(1) *Filing, contents, and responses thereto.* If the Administrator is of the opinion that the petition, or any portion thereof, does not substantially comply, in form or content, with the act or with the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, or is not filed in good faith, or is filed for purposes of delay, the Administrator may, within thirty days after the service of the petition, file with the Hearing Clerk a motion to dismiss the petition, or any portion thereof, on one or more of the grounds stated in this paragraph. Such motion shall specify the grounds of objection to the petition and if based, in whole or in part, on an allegation of fact not appearing on the face of the petition, shall be accompanied by appropriate affidavits or documentary evidence substantiating such allegations of fact. The motion may be accompanied by a memorandum of law. Upon receipt of such motion, the Hearing Clerk shall cause a copy thereof to be served upon the petitioner, together with a notice stating that all papers to be submitted in opposition to such motion including any memorandum of law, must be filed by the petitioner with the hearing clerk not later than 20 days after the service of such notice upon the petitioner. Upon the expiration of the time specified in such notice, or upon receipt of such papers from the petitioner, the hearing clerk shall transmit all papers which have been filed in connection with the motion to the Judge for consideration.

(2) *Decision by the Judge.* The Judge, after due consideration, shall render a decision upon the motion stating the reasons for his action. Such decision shall be in the form of an order and shall be filed with the hearing clerk who shall cause a copy thereof to be served upon the petitioner and a copy thereof to be transmitted to the Administrator. Any such order shall be final unless appealed pursuant to § 900.65: *Provided*, That within 20 days following the service upon the petitioner of a copy of the order

of the Judge dismissing the petition, or any portion thereof, on the ground that it does not substantially comply in form and content with the act or with paragraph (b) of this section, the petitioner shall be permitted to file an amended petition.

(3) *Oral argument.* Unless a written application for oral argument is filed by a party with the hearing clerk not later than the time fixed for filing papers in opposition to the motion, it shall be considered that the party does not desire oral argument. The granting of a request to make oral argument shall rest in the discretion of the Judge.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.52a Answer to petition.

(a) *Time of filing.* Within 30 days after the filing of the petition, the Administrator shall file an answer thereto: *Provided*, That if a motion to dismiss the petition, in whole or in part, is made pursuant to § 900.52(c), the answer shall be filed within 15 days after the service of an order of the judge denying the motion or granting the motion with respect to only a portion of the petition. The answer shall be filed with the hearing clerk who shall cause a copy thereof to be served promptly upon the petitioner.

(b) *Contents.* The answer shall specify which of the material allegations of fact or of law in the petition are controverted and which are not controverted. The answer also may contain affirmative allegations of fact constituting separate defenses and statements of objections to the sufficiency of the whole or any part of the petition.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.52b Amended pleadings.

At any time before the close of the hearing the petition or answer may be amended, but the hearing

shall, at the request of the adverse party, be adjourned or recessed for such reasonable time as the judge may determine to be necessary to protect the interests of the parties. Amendments subsequent to the first amendment or subsequent to the filing of an answer may be made only with leave of the judge or with the written consent of the adverse party.

§ 900.53 Withdrawal of petition.

If, at any time after the petition is filed, the petitioner desires to withdraw the same, he shall file with the hearing clerk (or, if filed during the course of a hearing, with the judge) a written request for permission to withdraw. The judge may, in his discretion, thereupon dismiss the petition without further procedure: *Provided*, That, if the request to withdraw is filed after a hearing has been opened, permission to withdraw shall be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

§ 900.54 Docket number.

Each proceeding, immediately following its institution, shall be assigned a docket number by the hearing clerk and thereafter the proceeding may be referred to by such number.

§ 900.55 Judges.

(a) *Assignment.* No judge who has any pecuniary interest in the outcome of the proceeding, or who has participated in any investigation preceding the institution of the proceeding, shall serve as judge in such proceeding.

(b) *Conduct.* The judge shall conduct the proceeding in a fair and impartial manner and shall not discuss ex parte the merits of the proceeding with any person who is or who has been connected in any manner with the proceeding in an advocative or investigative capacity.

(c) *Powers of judges.* Subject to review by the Secretary, as provided elsewhere in this subpart, the judge shall have power to:

- (1) Rule upon motions and requests;
- (2) Adjourn the hearing from time to time, and change the time and place of hearing;
- (3) Administer oaths and affirmations and take affidavits;
- (4) Issue subpoenas, under the facsimile signature of the Secretary, requiring the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of books, records, contracts, papers, and other documentary evidence;
- (5) Examine witnesses and receive evidence;
- (6) Take or order, under the facsimile signature of the Secretary, the taking of depositions;
- (7) Admit or exclude evidence;
- (8) Hear oral argument on facts or law;
- (9) Consolidate hearings upon two or more petitions pertaining to the same order;
- (10) Do all acts and take all measures necessary for the maintenance of order at the hearing and the efficient conduct of the proceeding.

(d) *Who may act in absence of judge.* In case of the absence of the judge or his inability to act, the powers and duties to be performed by him under these rules of practice in connection with a proceeding may, without abatement of the proceeding unless otherwise ordered by the Secretary, be assigned to any other judge.

(e) *Disqualification of judge.* The judge may at any time withdraw as judge in a proceeding if he deems himself to be disqualified. Upon the filing by an interested person in good faith of a timely and sufficient affidavit of personal bias or disqualification of a judge, the Secretary shall determine the matter as a part of the record and decision in the proceeding, after making such investigation or holding such hearings, or both, as he may deem appropriate in the circumstances.

§ 900.56 Consolidated hearings.

At the discretion of the judge, hearings upon two or more petitions pertaining to the same order may be consolidated, and the evidence taken at such

consolidated hearing may be embodied in a single record.

§ 900.57 Intervention.

Intervention in proceedings subject to this subpart shall not be allowed, except that, in the discretion of the Secretary or the judge, any person (other than the petitioner) showing a substantial interest in the outcome of a proceeding shall be permitted to participate in the oral argument and to file a brief.

§ 900.58 Prehearing conferences.

In any proceeding in which it appears that such procedure will expedite the proceeding, the judge, at any time prior to the commencement of or during the course of the hearing, may request the parties or their counsel to appear at a conference before him to consider (a) the simplification of issues; (b) the possibility of obtaining stipulations of fact and of documents which will avoid unnecessary proof; (c) the limitation of the number of expert or other witnesses; and (d) such other matters as may expedite and aid in the disposition of the proceeding. No transcript of such conference shall be made, but the judge shall prepare and file for the record a written summary of the action taken at the conference, which shall incorporate any written stipulations or agreements made by the parties at the conference or as a result of the conference. If the circumstances are such that a conference is impracticable, the judge may request the parties to correspond with him for the purpose of accomplishing any of the objects set forth in this section. The judge shall forward copies of letters and documents to the parties as the circumstances require. Correspondence in such negotiations shall not be a part of the record, but the judge shall submit a written summary for the record if any action is taken.

§ 900.59 Motions and requests.

(a) *General.* (1) All motions and requests shall be filed with the hearing clerk, except that those made during the course of an oral hearing may be filed with the judge or may be stated orally and made a part of the transcript.

(2) The judge is authorized to rule upon all motions and requests filed or made prior to the transmittal by the hearing clerk to the Secretary of the record as provided in this subpart. The Secretary shall rule upon all motions and requests filed after that time.

(b) *Certification of motions.* The submission or certification of any motion, request, objection, or other question to the Secretary, as provided in this subpart, shall be in the discretion of the judge.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973]

§ 900.60 Oral hearings before judge.

(a) *Time and place.* The judge shall set a time and place for hearing and shall file with the hearing clerk a notice stating the time and place of hearing. If any change in the time or place of hearing becomes necessary, it shall be made by the judge, who, in such event, shall file with the hearing clerk a notice of the change. Such notice shall be served upon the parties, unless it is made during the course of an oral hearing and made a part of the transcript.

(b) *Appearances—(1) Representation.* In any proceeding under the act, the parties may appear in person or by counsel or other representative. The Department, if represented by counsel, shall be represented by an attorney assigned by the General Counsel of the Department, and such attorney shall present or supervise the presentation of the position of the Department.

(2) *Debarment of counsel or representative.* Whenever, while a proceeding is pending before him, the judge finds that a person acting as counsel or representative for any party to the proceeding is

guilty of unethical or unprofessional conduct, the judge may order that such person be precluded from further acting as counsel or representative in such proceeding. An appeal to the Secretary may be taken from any such order, but the proceeding shall not be delayed or suspended pending disposition of the appeal: *Provided,* That the judge may suspend the proceeding for a reasonable time for the purpose of enabling the client to obtain other counsel or representative. In case the judge has issued an order precluding a person from further acting as counsel or representative in the proceeding, the judge, within a reasonable time thereafter, shall submit to the Secretary a report of the facts and circumstances surrounding the issuance of the order and shall recommend what action the Secretary should take respecting the appearance of such person as counsel or representative in other proceedings before the Secretary. Thereafter, the Secretary may, after notice and an opportunity for hearing, issue such order respecting the appearance of such person as counsel or representative in proceedings before the Secretary as the Secretary finds to be appropriate.

(3) *Failure to appear.* If the petitioner, after being duly notified, fails to appear at the hearing, he shall be deemed to have authorized the dismissal of the proceeding, without further procedure, and with or without prejudice as the judge may determine. In the event that the petitioner appears at the hearing and no representative of the Department appears, the judge shall proceed *ex parte* to hear the evidence of the petitioner. *Provided,* That failure on the part of such representative of the Department to appear at a hearing shall not be deemed to be waiver of the Department's right to file suggested findings of fact, conclusions and order; to be served with a copy of the judge's initial decision and to appeal to the Secretary with respect thereto.

(c) *Order of proceeding.* Except as may be determined otherwise by the judge, the petitioner shall proceed first at the hearing.

(d) *Evidence—(1) In general.* The hearing shall be publicly conducted, and the testimony given at the hearing shall be reported verbatim.

(i) The testimony of witnesses at a hearing shall be upon oath or affirmation and subject to cross-examination.

(ii) Any witness may, in the discretion of the judge, be examined separately and apart from all other witnesses except those who may be parties to the proceeding.

(iii) The judge shall exclude, insofar as practicable, evidence which is immaterial, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious, or which is not of the sort upon which responsible persons are accustomed to rely.

(2) *Objections.* If a party objects to the admission or rejection of any evidence or to the limitation of the scope of any examination or cross-examination, or any other ruling of the judge, he shall state briefly the grounds of such objection, whereupon an automatic exception will follow which may be pursued in an appeal pursuant to § 900.65 by the party adversely affected by the judge's ruling.

(3) *Depositions.* The deposition of any witness shall be admitted, in the manner hereinafter provided in and subject to the provisions of § 900.61.

(4) *Affidavits.* Except as is otherwise provided in this subpart, affidavits may be admitted only if the evidence is otherwise admissible and the parties agree (which may be determined by their failure to make timely objections) that affidavits may be used.

(5) *Proof and authentication of official records or documents.* An official record or document, when admissible for any purpose, shall be admissible in evidence without the production of the person who made or prepared the same. Such record or document shall, in the discretion of the judge, be evidenced by an official publication thereof or by a copy attested by the person having legal custody thereof and accompanied by a certificate that such person has the custody.

(6) *Exhibits.* All written statements, charts, tabulations, or similar data offered in evidence at the hearing shall, after identification by the proponent and upon a satisfactory showing of the admissibility

of the contents thereof, be numbered as exhibits and received in evidence and made a part of the record. Except where the judge finds that the furnishing of copies is impracticable, a copy of each exhibit, in addition to the original, shall be filed with the judge for the use of each other party to the proceeding. The judge shall advise the parties as to the exact number of copies which will be required to be filed and shall make and have noted on the record the proper distribution of the copies. If the testimony of a witness refers to a statute, or to a report, document, or transcript, the judge, after inquiry relating to the identification of such statute, report, document, or transcript, shall determine whether the same shall be produced at the hearing and physically be made a part of the evidence as an exhibit, or whether it shall be incorporated into the evidence by reference. If relevant and material matter offered in evidence is embraced in a report, document, or transcript containing immaterial or irrelevant matter, such immaterial or irrelevant matter shall be excluded and shall be segregated insofar as practicable, subject to the direction of the judge.

(7) *Official notice.* Official notice will be taken of such matters as are judicially noticed by the courts of the United States and of any other matter of technical, scientific, or commercial fact of established character: *Provided,* That the parties shall be given adequate notice, at the hearing or by reference in the judge's report or the tentative order or otherwise, of matters so noticed, and (except where official notice is taken, for the first time in the proceeding, in the final order) shall be given adequate opportunity to show that such facts are erroneously noticed.

(8) *Offer of proof.* Whenever evidence is excluded from the record, the party offering such evidence may make an offer of proof, which shall be included in the transcript. The offer of proof shall consist of a brief statement describing the evidence to be offered. If the evidence consists of a brief oral statement or of an exhibit, it shall be inserted into the transcript in toto. In such event, it shall be considered a part of the transcript if the Secretary

decides that the judge's ruling in excluding the evidence was erroneous. The judge shall not allow the insertion of such evidence in toto if the taking of such evidence will consume a considerable length of time at the hearing. In the latter event, if on appeal the Secretary decides that the judge erred in excluding the evidence, and that such error was substantial, the hearing shall be reopened to permit the taking of such evidence.

(e) *Transcript*. Transcripts of hearings shall be made available to any person at actual cost of duplication.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.61 Depositions.

(a) *Procedure in lieu of deposition*. Before any party may have testimony taken by deposition, said party shall, if practicable, submit to the other party an affidavit which shall set forth the facts to which the witness would testify, if the deposition should be taken. If, after examination of such affidavit, the other party agrees, or (within 10 days after submission of the affidavit) fails to object, that the affidavit may be used in lieu of the deposition, the judge shall admit the affidavit in evidence and shall not order the deposition to be taken.

(b) *Application for taking deposition*. Upon the application of a party to the proceeding, the judge may, at any time after the filing of the moving paper, order, under the facsimile signature of the Secretary, the taking of testimony by deposition. The application shall be in writing and shall be filed with the hearing clerk and shall set forth: (1) The name and address of the proposed deponent; (2) the name and address of the person (referred to hereinafter in this section as the *judge*), qualified under the rules in this part to take depositions, before whom the proposed examination is to be made; (3) the proposed time and place of the examination, which shall be at least 15 days after the

date of the mailing of the application; and (4) the reasons why such deposition should be taken.

(c) *Judge's order for taking deposition*. If, after the examination of the application, the judge is of the opinion that the deposition should be taken, he shall order its taking. The order shall be filed with the hearing clerk and shall be served upon the parties and shall state: (1) The time and place of the examination (which shall not be less than 10 days after the filing of the order); (2) the name of the judge before whom the examination is to be made; (3) the name of the deponent. The judge and the time and place need not be the same as those suggested in the application.

(d) *Qualifications of judge*. The deposition shall be taken before the judge, or before a judge authorized by the law of the United States or by the law of the place of the examination to administer oaths, or before a judge authorized by the Secretary to administer oaths.

(e) *Procedure on examination*. (1) The deponent shall be examined under oath or affirmation and shall be subject to cross-examination. The testimony of the deponent shall be recorded by the judge or by some person under his direction and in his presence. In lieu of oral examination, parties may transmit written interrogatories to the judge prior to the examination and the judge shall propound such interrogatories to the deponent.

(2) The applicant must arrange for the examination of the witness either by oral examination or by written interrogatories. If it is found by the judge, upon the protest of a party to the proceeding, that such party has his residence and his place of business more than 100 miles from the place of the examination and that it would constitute an undue hardship upon such party to be represented at the examination, the applicant will be required to conduct the examination by means of interrogatories. When the examination is conducted by means of interrogatories, copies of the interrogatories shall be served upon the other parties to the proceeding at least five days prior to the date set for the examination, and the other parties shall be

afforded an opportunity to file with the judge cross-interrogatories at any time prior to the time of the examination.

(f) *Certification by judge.* The judge shall certify on the deposition that the deponent was duly sworn by him and that the deposition is a true record of the deponent's testimony. He shall then securely seal the deposition, together with two copies thereof, in an envelope and mail the same by registered mail to the hearing clerk.

(g) *Use of depositions.* A deposition ordered and taken in accord with the provisions of this section may be used in a proceeding under the act if the judge finds that the evidence is otherwise admissible and (1) that the witness is dead; or (2) that the witness is at a distance greater than 100 miles from the place of hearing, unless it appears that the absence of the witness was procured by the party offering the deposition; or (3) that the witness is unable to attend or testify because of age, sickness, infirmity, or imprisonment; or (4) that the party offering the deposition has endeavored to procure the attendance of the witness by subpoena but has been unable to do so; or (5) that such exceptional circumstances exist as to make it desirable, in the interests of justice, to allow the deposition to be used. If a deposition has been taken, and the party upon whose application it was taken refuses to offer it in evidence, the other party may offer the deposition, or any part thereof, in evidence.

§ 900.62 Subpenas.

(a) *Issuance of subpoenas.* The attendance of witnesses and the production of documentary evidence from any place in the United States on behalf of any party to the proceeding may, by subpoena, be required at any designated place of hearing. Subpenas may be issued by the Secretary or by the judge, under the facsimile signature of the Secretary, upon a reasonable showing by the applicant of the grounds, necessity, and reasonable scope thereof.

(b) *Application for subpoena duces tecum.* Subpenas for the production of documentary evidence, unless issued by the judge upon his own motion, shall be issued only upon a certified written application. Such application shall specify, as exactly as possible, the documents desired and shall show their competency, relevancy, and materiality and the necessity for their production.

(c) *Service of subpoenas.* Subpenas may be served (1) by a United States Marshal or his deputy, or (2) by any other person who is not less than 18 years of age, or (3) by registering and mailing a copy of the subpoena addressed to the person to be served at his or its last known residence or principal place of business or residence. Proof of service may be made by the return of service on the subpoena by the United States Marshal or his deputy; or, if served by an individual other than a United States Marshal or his deputy, by an affidavit of such person stating that he personally served a copy of the subpoena upon the person named therein; or, if service was by registered mail, by an affidavit made by the person mailing the subpoena that it was mailed as provided in this paragraph and by the signed return post office receipt: *Provided*, That, if the subpoena is issued on behalf of the Department, the return receipt without an affidavit of mailing shall be sufficient proof of service. In making personal service, the person making service shall leave a copy of the subpoena with the person subpoenaed; the original, bearing or accompanied by the required proof of service, shall be returned to the official who issued the same.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.63 Fees and mileage.

Witnesses who are subpoenaed and who appear in such proceeding, including witnesses whose depositions are taken, shall be paid the same fees and mileage that are paid witnesses in the courts of the United States, and persons taking depositions

shall be entitled to the same fees as are paid for like services in the courts of the United States, to be paid by the party at whose request the deposition is taken. Witness fees and mileage shall be paid by the party at whose instance the witnesses appear, and claims therefor, as to witnesses subpoenaed on behalf of the Department, shall be proved before the person issuing the subpoena, and, as to witnesses subpoenaed on behalf of any other party, shall be presented to such party.

§ 900.64 The Judge's decision.

(a) *Corrections to and certification of transcript.*

(1) At such time as the judge may specify, but not later than the time fixed for filing proposed findings of fact, conclusions and order, or briefs, as the case may be, the parties may file with the judge proposed corrections to the transcript.

(2) As soon as practicable after the filing of proposed findings of fact, conclusions and order, or briefs, as the case may be, the judge shall file with the hearing clerk his certificate indicating any corrections to be made in the transcript, and stating that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the transcript, as corrected, is a true, correct, and complete transcript of the testimony given at the hearing, and that the exhibits are all the exhibits properly a part of the hearing record. The original of such certificate shall be attached to the original transcript and a copy of such certificate shall be served upon each of the parties by the hearing clerk who shall also enter onto the transcript (without obscuring the text) any correction noted in the certification.

(b) *Proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders.* Within 10 days (unless the judge shall have announced at the hearing a shorter or longer period of time) after the transcript has been filed with the hearing clerk, as provided in paragraph (a) of this section, each party may file with the hearing clerk proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and order, based solely upon the evidence of record, and briefs in support thereof.

(c) *Judge's Decision.* The judge, within a reasonable time after the termination of the period allowed for the filing of proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders, and briefs in support thereof, shall prepare upon the basis of the record, and shall file with the hearing clerk, his initial decision, a copy of which shall be served by the hearing clerk, upon each of the parties. Such decision shall become final without further proceedings 35 days after the date of service thereof, unless there is an appeal to the Secretary by a party to the proceeding: *Provided, however,* That no decision shall be final for the purpose of judicial review except a final decision issued by the Secretary pursuant to an appeal by a party to the proceeding.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29799, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10830, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.65 Appeals to Secretary: Transmittal of record.

(a) *Filing of appeal.* Any party who disagrees with a judge's decision or any part thereof, may appeal the decision to the Secretary by filing an appeal petition with the Hearing Clerk within 30 days after service of said decision upon said party. Each issue set forth in the appeal, and the arguments thereon, shall be separately numbered; shall be plainly and concisely stated; and shall contain detailed citations of the record, statutes, regulations and authorities being relied upon in support thereof. The appeal petition shall be served upon the other party to the proceeding by the hearing clerk.

(b) *Argument before Secretary—(1) Oral argument.* A party bringing an appeal may request within the prescribed time period for filing such appeal, an opportunity for oral argument before the Secretary. Failure to make such request in writing, within the prescribed time period, shall be deemed a waiver of oral argument. The Secretary, in his discretion, may grant, refuse or limit any request for oral argument on appeal.

(2) *Scope of argument.* Argument to be heard on appeal, whether oral or in a written brief, shall be limited to the issues raised by the appeal, except that if the Secretary determines that additional issues should be argued, the parties shall be given reasonable notice of such determination, so as to permit preparation of adequate arguments on all the issues to be argued.

(c) *Response.* Within 20 days after service of an appeal brought by a party to the proceeding, any other party may file a response in support of or in opposition to such appeal.

(d) *Transmittal of record.* Whenever an appeal is filed by a party to the proceeding, the hearing clerk shall transmit to the Secretary the record of the proceeding. Such record shall include: The pleadings; any motions and requests filed, and the rulings thereon; the transcript of the testimony taken at the hearing, as well as the exhibits filed in connection therewith; any statements filed under the shortened procedure; any documents or papers filed in connection with prehearing conferences; such proposed findings of fact, conclusions, and orders, and briefs in support thereof, as may have been filed in connection with the hearing; the judge's initial decision; and the appeal petition; briefs in support thereof, and responses thereto as may have been filed in the proceeding.

[38 FR 29799, Oct. 29, 1973, as amended at 67 FR 10830, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.66 Consideration of appeal by the Secretary and issuance of final order.

(a) *Consideration of appeal.* As soon as practicable after the receipt of the record from the hearing clerk, or, in case oral argument was had, as soon as practicable thereafter, the Secretary, upon the basis of and after due consideration of the record, shall rule on the appeal. If the Secretary decides that no change or modification of the judge's decision is warranted, he may adopt the Judge's decision as the final order of the Secretary,

preserving any right of the party bringing the appeal to seek judicial review of such decision in the proper forum. At no stage of the proceeding between its institution and the issuance of the order shall the Secretary discuss *ex parte* the merits of the proceeding with any person who is connected with the proceeding in an advocative or an investigative capacity, or with any representative of such person: *Provided, however,* That the Secretary may discuss the merits of the proceeding with such a person if all parties to the proceeding, or their representatives, have been given an opportunity to be present. If, notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, a memorandum or other communication from any party, or from any person acting on behalf of any party, which relates to the merits of the proceeding, receives the personal attention of the Secretary (or, if an official other than the Secretary is to issue the order, then of such other official) during the pendency of the proceeding, such memorandum or communication shall be regarded as argument made in the proceeding and shall be filed with the hearing clerk, who shall serve a copy thereof upon the opposite party to file a reply thereto.

(b) *Issuance of final order.* A final order issued by the Secretary shall be filed with the hearing clerk, who shall serve it upon the parties: *Provided,* That, if the terms of the order differ substantially from those proposed in the decision of the judge, the Secretary shall, if he deems it advisable to do so, direct that a copy of the order be served upon the parties as a tentative order; and, in such event, opportunity shall be given the parties to file exceptions thereto and written arguments or briefs in support of such exceptions. In such case, if exceptions are filed within a period of time (to be fixed by the Secretary but not to exceed 20 days) following the service of the tentative order, the Secretary shall give consideration, to and shall make such changes in the tentative order as he deems to be appropriate; otherwise, the tentative order shall become final, as of the day following the date of

expiration of the period fixed for the filing of exceptions.

[38 FR 29799, Oct. 29, 1973]

§ 900.68 Petitions for reopening hearings; for rehearings or rearguments of proceedings; or for reconsideration of orders.

(a) *Petition requisite*—(1) *Filing; service.* A petition for reopening the hearing to take further evidence, or for rehearing or reargument of the proceeding, or for reconsideration of the order shall be made by petition addressed to the Secretary and filed with the hearing clerk, who immediately shall notify and serve a copy thereof upon the other party to the proceeding. Every such petition shall state specifically the grounds relied upon.

(2) *Petitions to reopen hearings.* A petition to reopen the hearing for the purpose of taking additional evidence may be filed at any time prior to the issuance of the final order. Every such petition shall state briefly the nature and purpose of the evidence to be adduced, shall show that such evidence is not merely cumulative, and shall set forth a good reason why such evidence was not adduced at the hearing.

(3) *Petitions to rehear or reargue proceedings, or to reconsider orders.* A petition to rehear or reargue the proceeding or to reconsider the final order shall be filed within 15 days after the date of the service of such order. Every such petition shall state specifically the matters claimed to have been erroneously decided, and alleged errors must be briefly stated.

(b) *Procedure for disposition of petitions.* Within 10 days following the service of any petition provided for in this section, the other party to the proceeding shall file with the hearing clerk an answer thereto. As soon as practicable thereafter, the Secretary shall announce the decision granting or denying the petition. Unless the Secretary shall determine otherwise, the issuance or operation of the order shall not be stayed pending the decision of the

Secretary upon the petition. In the event that any such petition is granted by the Secretary, the applicable rules of practice, as set out elsewhere in this subpart, shall be followed.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 67 FR 10830, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.69 Filing; service; extensions of time; effective date of filing; and computation of time.

(a) *Filing; number of copies.* Except as provided otherwise herein, all documents or papers required or authorized in this subpart to be filed with the hearing clerk shall be filed in quadruplicate: *Provided, That*, if there are more than two parties to the proceeding, a sufficient number of additional copies shall be filed so as to provide for service upon all the parties to the proceeding. Any document or paper, required or authorized in this subpart to be filed with the hearing clerk, shall, during the course of an oral hearing, be filed with the judge.

(b) *Service; proof of service.* Copies of all such papers shall be served upon the parties by the hearing clerk, by the judge, or by some other employee of the Department or by a United States Marshal or his deputy. Service shall be made either (1) by delivering a copy of the document or paper to the individual to be served or to a member of the partnership to be served or to the president, secretary, or other executive officer or any director of the corporation, organization, or association to be served, or to the attorney or agent of record of such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association; or (2) by leaving a copy of the document or paper at the principal office or place of business of such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association, or of his or its attorney or agent of record; or (3) by registering and mailing a copy of the document or paper, addressed to such individual, partnership, corporation, organization, or association, or to his or

its attorney or agent of record, at his or its last known principal office, place of business, or residence. Proof of service hereunder shall be made by the affidavit of the person who actually made the service. The affidavit contemplated herein shall be filed with the hearing clerk, and the fact of filing thereof shall be noted on the docket of the proceeding.

(c) *Extensions of time.* The time for the filing of any documents or papers required or authorized in this subpart to be filed may be extended upon (1) a written stipulation between the parties, or (2) upon the request of a party, by the judge before the transmittal of the record to the Secretary, or by the Secretary at any other time if, in the judgment of the Secretary or the judge, as the case may be, there is good reason for the extension.

(d) *Effective date of filing.* Any document or paper required or authorized in this subpart to be filed shall be deemed to be filed at the time it is received by the Hearing Clerk.

(e) *Computation of time.* Each day, including Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays, shall be included in computing the time allowed for filing any document or paper: *Provided*, That when the time for filing a document or paper expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal public holiday, the time allowed for filing the document or paper shall be extended to include the following business day.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 67 FR 10830, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.70 Applications for interim relief.

(a) *Filing the application.* A person who has filed a petition pursuant to § 900.52 may by separate application filed with the hearing clerk apply to the Secretary for an order postponing the effective date of, or suspending the application of, the marketing order or any provision thereof, or any obligation imposed in connection therewith, pending final determination of the proceeding.

(b) *Contents of the application.* The application shall contain a statement of the facts upon which the relief is requested, including any facts showing irreparable injury. The application must be signed and sworn to by the petitioner and any facts alleged therein which are not within his personal knowledge shall be supported by affidavits of a person or persons having personal knowledge of such facts or by proper documentary evidence thereof.

(c) *Answer to application.* Immediately upon receipt of the application, the hearing clerk shall transmit a copy thereof, together with all supporting papers, to the Administrator, who shall, within 20 days, or such other time fixed by the Secretary, after the filing of the application file an answer thereto with the hearing clerk.

(d) *Contents of answer.* The answer shall contain a statement of the objections, if any, of the Administrator to the application for interim relief, and may be supported by affidavits and documentary evidence.

(e) *Transmittal to Secretary.* Upon receiving the answer of the Administrator or upon the expiration of the time for filing the answer, the hearing clerk shall transmit to the Secretary for his decision all papers filed in connection with the application.

(f) *Hearing and oral argument.* The Secretary may, in his discretion, permit oral argument or the taking of testimony in connection with such application. However, unless written request therefor is filed with the hearing clerk prior to the transmittal of the papers to the Secretary, the parties shall be deemed to have waived oral argument and the taking of testimony.

(g) *Decision by Secretary.* The Secretary may grant or deny the application. Any action taken by the Secretary shall be in the form of an order filed with the hearing clerk and shall contain a brief statement of the reasons for the action taken. The hearing clerk shall cause copies of the order to be served upon the parties.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 67 FR 10830, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.71 Hearing before Secretary.

The Secretary may act in the place and stead of a judge in any proceeding hereunder. When he so acts the hearing clerk shall transmit the record to the Secretary at the expiration of the period provided for the filing of proposed findings of fact, conclusions and orders, and the Secretary shall thereupon, after due consideration of the record, issue his final order in the proceeding: *Provided*, That he may issue a tentative order in which event the parties shall be afforded an opportunity to file exceptions before the issuance of the final order.