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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains regulatory documents having general applicability and legal effect, most of which are keyed to and codified in the Code of Federal Regulations, which is published under 50 titles pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 1510.

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OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 185

RIN 3206-AN39

Program Fraud Civil Remedies: Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This rule adjusts the level of civil monetary penalties contained in U.S. Office of Personnel Management regulations implementing the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986.

DATES: Effective: October 31, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: R. Alan Miller, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Personnel Management, 1900 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20415, *RAlan.Miller@opm.gov*, (202) 606-1700.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

On November 2, 2015, the President signed into law the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act

Improvements Act of 2015 (Sec. 701 of Pub. L. 114-74) (“the Act”). The Act required agencies to: (1) Adjust the level of civil monetary penalties with an initial “catch-up” adjustment through an interim final rulemaking, and (2) make subsequent annual adjustments for inflation. The purpose of these adjustments is to maintain the deterrent effect of civil penalties.

OPM has updated the agency’s monetary penalties annually since the passage of the 2015 Act.

This rule takes into account adjustments for the year 2018 based on inflation for that year. These calculations were made based on guidance contained in Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-11:

CFR citation	Description of the penalty	Current penalty	2018 inflation adjustment
5 CFR 185.103(a)	Civil Penalty for False Claims	\$11,181	\$11,463
5 CFR 185.103(f)(2)	Civil Penalty for False Statements	11,181	11,463

This rule makes additional adjustments for the year 2018 based on inflation for that year. These calculations were made based on guidance contained in Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-19-04.

This final rule is being issued without prior public notice or opportunity for public comments. The 2015 Act’s amendments to the Inflation Adjustment Act required the agency to adjust penalties initially through an interim final rulemaking, which did not require the agency to complete a notice and comment process prior to promulgating the interim final rule. The amendments also explicitly required the agency to make subsequent annual adjustments notwithstanding 5 U.S.C. 553 (the section of the Administrative Procedure Act that normally requires agencies to engage in notice and comment). The formula used for adjusting the amount of civil penalties is given by statute, with no discretion provided to OPM regarding the computation of the adjustments. OPM is charged only with performing ministerial computations to determine the amount of adjustment to the civil penalties due to increases in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

II. Calculation of Adjustment

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues guidance annually on calculating adjustments. Under this guidance, OPM has identified applicable civil monetary penalties and calculated the catch-up adjustment. A civil monetary penalty is any assessment with a dollar amount that is levied for a violation of a Federal civil statute or regulation, and is assessed or enforceable through a civil action in Federal court or an administrative proceeding. A civil monetary penalty does not include a penalty levied for violation of a criminal statute, or fees for services, licenses, permits, or other regulatory review. The calculated catch-up adjustment is based on the percent change between the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the month of October in the year of the previous adjustment (or in the year of establishment, if no adjustment has been made) and the October 2015 CPI-U.

The Office of Management and Budget published guidance on adjusting penalties based on the increase in the CPI-U between October of 2017 and October of 2018. See December 14, 2018, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies,

from Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget, re: *Implementation of Penalty Inflation Adjustments for 2019, Pursuant to the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015*. This guidance provided OPM with the level to which civil penalties should be adjusted as annual inflation adjustments following the initial necessary update to comply with the 2015 Act.

Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-19-04 stated that the cost of living multiplier for calculating adjustments in 2018 was 1.02522. This multiplier is to be applied to the current level of civil monetary penalties for agencies. When OPM’s current penalties of \$11,181 are multiplied by 1.02522, the resulting penalty amount is \$11,463.

III. Procedural Requirements

A. Regulatory Impact Analysis: Executive Order 12866, as Supplemented by Executive Order 13563

OPM has examined the impact of this rule as required by Executive Order 12866 and Executive Order 13563, which directs agencies to assess all costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives and, if regulation is

necessary, to select regulatory approaches that maximize net benefits (including potential economic, environmental, public, health, and safety effects, distributive impacts, and equity). A regulatory impact analysis must be prepared for major rules with economically significant effects of \$100 million or more in any one year. This rule is not “significant regulatory action,” under Executive Order 12866.

B. Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs

This rule is not an E.O. 13771 regulatory action because it is not significant under E.O. 12866.

C. Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) requires an agency to prepare a regulatory flexibility analysis for rules unless the agency certifies that the rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The RFA applies only to rules for which an agency is required to first publish a proposed rule. See 5 U.S.C. 603(a) and 604(a). The Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act Improvements Act of 2015 requires agencies to adjust civil penalties annually. No discretion is allowed. Thus, the RFA does not apply to this final rule.

D. Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (5 U.S.C. 804(2))

This rule is not a major rule under the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. This rule:

- (a) Does not have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more.
- (b) Will not cause a major increase in costs or prices for consumers, individual industries, Federal, State, or local government agencies, or geographic regions.
- (c) Does not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or the ability of United States-based enterprises to compete with foreign-based enterprises.

E. Unfunded Mandate Reform Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1532)

This rule does not involve a Federal mandate that may result in the expenditure by State, local and tribal governments, in the aggregate, or by the private sector, of \$100 million or more and that such rulemaking will not significantly or uniquely affect small governments.

F. E.O. 12630, Takings

This rule does not have takings implications.

G. E.O. 13132, Federalism

This rule does not have federalism implications. The rule does not have substantial direct effects on the States, on the relationship between the National Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government.

H. E.O. 12988, Civil Justice Reform

This rule complies with the requirements of E.O. 12988. Specifically, this rule:

- (a) Does not unduly burden the judicial system.
- (b) Meets the criteria of section 3(a) requiring that all regulations be reviewed to eliminate errors and ambiguity and be written to minimize litigation; and
- (c) Meets the criteria of section 3(b)(2) requiring that all regulations be written in clear language and contain clear legal standards.

I. E.O. 13175, Consultation With Indian Tribes

In accordance with Executive Order 13175, OPM has evaluated this rule and determined that it has no tribal implications.

J. Paperwork Reduction Act

This document does not contain proposed information collection requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104–13.

List of Subjects in 5 CFR Part 185

Program Fraud Civil Remedies, Claims, Penalties, Basis for Civil Penalties and Assessments.

Office of Personnel Management.

Stephen Hickman,

Regulatory Affairs.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, amend part 185 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations as follows:

PART 185—PROGRAM FRAUD CIVIL REMEDIES: CIVIL MONETARY PENALTY INFLATION ADJUSTMENT

- 1. The authority citation for part 185 continues to read:

Authority: 28 U.S.C. 2461 note.

§ 185.103 [Amended]

- 2. Section 185.103 is amended in paragraphs (a) introductory text and

(f)(2) by revising “\$11,181” to read as “\$11,463”.

[FR Doc. 2019–21132 Filed 9–30–19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325–48–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary of Agriculture

7 CFR Part 1

Rules of Practice and Procedure Governing Formal Rulemaking Proceedings Instituted by the Secretary

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or Department) is amending the regulations on the rules of practice and procedure governing formal rulemaking proceedings instituted by the Secretary. This final rule amends the definition of judge so that the term is consistently applied to all USDA formal rulemaking proceedings.

DATES: This final rule is effective October 1, 2019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rupa Chilukuri, Trial Attorney, Office of the General Counsel, telephone: 202–720–4982, email: Rupa.Chilukuri@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: USDA is issuing this final rule to amend the definition of judge in the rules of practice and procedure governing formal rulemaking proceedings instituted by the Secretary. The current definition of judge in the rules of practice at 7 CFR 1.802 only includes administrative law judges. To provide the agency with more flexibility in overseeing formal rulemaking proceedings, and to better allocate resources within the Department, we are expanding the definition of judge to be consistent with how that term is defined in the Department’s other rules of practice and procedure applicable to formal rulemaking proceedings (*i.e.*, 7 CFR part 900 (General Regulations) and 7 CFR part 1200 (Rules of Practice and Procedure Governing Proceedings Under Research, Promotion, and Information Programs)). Judge will now be defined as any administrative law judge appointed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3105 or any presiding official appointed by the Secretary, and assigned to conduct the proceeding.