

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**Office of the Secretary****45 CFR Subtitle A****Policy on Adhering to the Text of the Administrative Procedure Act**

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services.

ACTION: Policy statement.

SUMMARY: The Department of Health and Human Services' (the Department) Immediate Office of the Secretary is rescinding the policy on Public Participation in Rule Making (Richardson Waiver) and re-aligning the Department's rule-making procedures with the Administrative Procedure Act.

DATES: March 3, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sean R. Keveney, Acting General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, HHS, 200 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20201. 202-690-7741.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) establishes procedures for the issuance of rules and regulations. 5 U.S.C. 553. An agency generally is required to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking in the **Federal Register**; give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rulemaking through the submission of written data, views, or arguments; and publish a final rule that is accompanied by a statement of the rule's basis and purpose. 5 U.S.C. 553. The APA exempts from these requirements "matter(s) relating to agency management or personnel or to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts." 5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2). The APA also permits an agency to forgo these requirements for "good cause" when the agency finds that the procedures are "impracticable, unnecessary, or contrary to the public interest." 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B).

In a 1971 **Federal Register** document, the Department adopted a policy that waived the APA's statutory exemption from procedural rulemaking requirements for rules and regulations relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts (Richardson Waiver). 36 FR 2532 (Feb. 5, 1971). The Richardson Waiver thus required the Department to use the APA's notice and comment rulemaking procedures for these types of matters. The policy also instructed the Department to use the good cause exception "sparingly." *Id.* The Department later proposed a rule to

formally confirm the policy regarding the Department's use of rulemaking procedures for rules and regulations relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts. 47 FR 26860 (June 22, 1982). The proposed rule was never adopted.

The policy waiving the statutory exemption for rules relating to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts is contrary to the clear text of the APA and imposes on the Department obligations beyond the maximum procedural requirements specified in the APA. *See Perez v. Mortgage Bankers Ass'n*, 575 U.S. 92, 100 (2015) (finding that courts lack authority to impose obligations "beyond the 'maximum procedural requirements' specified in the APA"). The text of the APA recognizes that it is necessary and appropriate to issue rules relating to agency management or personnel or to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts without notice and comment procedures. It also is contrary to the clear text of the APA to use the good cause exception "sparingly." The extra-statutory obligations of the Richardson Waiver impose costs on the Department and the public, are contrary to the efficient operation of the Department, and impede the Department's flexibility to adapt quickly to legal and policy mandates.

Effective immediately, the Richardson Waiver is rescinded and is no longer the policy of the Department. In accordance with the APA, "matters relating to agency management or personnel or to public property, loans, grants, benefits, or contracts," are exempt from the notice and comment procedures of 5 U.S.C. 553, except as otherwise required by law. Agencies and offices of the Department have discretion to apply notice and comment procedures to these matters but are not required to do so, except as otherwise required by law. Additionally, the good cause exception should be used in appropriate circumstances in accordance with the requirements of the APA. The Department will continue to follow notice and comment rulemaking procedures in all instances in which it is required to do so by the statutory text of the APA.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.,

Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration****49 CFR Part 513**

[Docket No. NHTSA-2023-0014]

RIN 2127-AL85

Implementing the Whistleblower Provisions of the Vehicle Safety Act

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notification of enforcement discretion.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will not enforce the requirements of the final rule titled "Implementing the Whistleblower Provisions of the Vehicle Safety Act" until March 20, 2025.

DATES: This notice of enforcement discretion is effective from March 3, 2025 to March 20, 2025.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dylan Voneiff, Office of the Chief Counsel, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (telephone: (202) 763-8536), email: dylan.voneiff@dot.gov; or Daniel Rabinovitz, Office of the Chief Counsel, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (telephone: (202) 366-5263), email: daniel.rabinovitz@dot.gov.

Electronic Access and Filing: This document, the notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), all comments received, the final rule (including Form WB-INFO (Appendix A), Form WB-RELEASE (Appendix B), Form WB-AWARD (Appendix C)), and all background material may be viewed online at www.regulations.gov using the docket number listed above. Electronic retrieval help and guidelines are available on the website. It is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. An electronic copy of this document may also be downloaded from the Office of the Federal Register's website at www.federalregister.gov and the Government Publishing Office's website at www.GovInfo.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In December 2024, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued a final rule titled, "Implementing the Whistleblower Provisions of the Vehicle Safety Act," 89 FR 101952 (Dec. 17, 2024). This final rule fulfills a requirement in the Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act (Whistleblower Act), 49 U.S.C. 30172(i), that NHTSA promulgate regulations on the