

Department of Veterans Affairs

§ 1.582

setting forth the reasons for his or her disagreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs refusal and also advise of the provisions for judicial review of the reviewing official's determination. (5 U.S.C. 552a(g)(1)(A))

(d) In any disclosure, containing information about which the individual has filed a statement of disagreement, occurring after the filing of the statement under paragraph (c) of this section, the Department of Veterans Affairs will clearly note any part of the record which is disputed and provide copies of the statement (and, if the Department of Veterans Affairs deems it appropriate, copies of a concise statement of the Department of Veterans Affairs reasons for not making the amendments requested) to persons or other agencies to whom the disputed record has been disclosed. (5 U.S.C. 552a(d)(4)) (38 U.S.C. 501)

[47 FR 16324, Apr. 16, 1982]

§ 1.580 Administrative review.

(a) Upon denial or a request under 38 CFR 1.577 or 1.579, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official or designated employee will inform the requester in writing of the denial, cite the reason or reasons and the Department of Veterans Affairs regulations upon which the denial is based, and advise that the denial may be appealed to the General Counsel.

(b) The final agency decision in such appeals will be made by the General Counsel or the Deputy General Counsel.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501)

[40 FR 33944, Aug. 12, 1975, as amended at 47 FR 16324, Apr. 16, 1982; 55 FR 21546, May 25, 1990]

§ 1.581 [Reserved]

§ 1.582 Exemptions.

(a) Certain systems of records maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs are exempted from provisions of the Privacy Act in accordance with exemptions (j) and (k) of 5 U.S.C. 552a.

(b) *Exemption of Inspector General Systems of Records.* The Department of Veterans Affairs provides limited access to Inspector General Systems of Records as indicated.

(1) The following systems of records are exempted pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2) from subsections (c)(3) and (4), (d), (e)(1), (2) and (3), (e)(4) (G), (H) and (I), (e)(5) and (8), (f) and (g) of 5 U.S.C. 552a; in addition, the following systems of records are exempted pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) from subsections (c)(3), (d), (e)(1), (e)(4) (G), (H), and (I), and (f) of 5 U.S.C. 552a:

(i) Investigation Reports of Persons Allegedly Involved in Irregularities Concerning VA and Federal Laws, Regulations, Programs, etc.—VA (11 VA51); and

(ii) Inspector General Complaint Center Records—VA (66VA53).

(2) These exemptions apply to the extent that information in those systems is subject to exemptions pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a (j)(2) and (k)(2).

(3) For the reasons set forth, the systems of records listed under paragraph (b)(1) of this section are exempted under sections 552a (j)(2) and (k)(2) from the following provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires that upon request, an agency must give an individual named in a record an accounting which reflects the disclosure of the record to other persons or agencies. This accounting must state the date, nature and purpose of each disclosure of the record and the name and address of the recipient. The application of this provision would alert subjects to the existence of the investigation and identify that such persons are subject of that investigation. Since release of such information to subjects would provide them with significant information concerning the nature of the investigation, it could result in the altering or destruction of derivative evidence which is obtained from third parties, improper influencing of witnesses, and other activities that could impede or compromise the investigation.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(4), (d), (e)(4) (G) and (H), (f) and (g) relate to an individual's right to be notified of the existence of records pertaining to such individual; requirements for identifying an individual who requests access to records; the agency procedures relating to access to records and the amendment of information contained in such

records; and the civil remedies available to the individual in the event of adverse determinations by an agency concerning access to or amendment of information contained in record systems. This system is exempt from the foregoing provisions for the following reasons: To notify an individual at the individual's request of the existence of records in an investigative file pertaining to such individual or to grant access to an investigative file could interfere with investigative and enforcement proceedings, threaten the safety of individuals who have cooperated with authorities, constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy of others, disclose the identity of confidential sources, reveal confidential information supplied by these sources, and disclose investigative techniques and procedures.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4)(I) requires the publication of the categories of sources of records in each system of records. The application of this provision could disclose investigative techniques and procedures and cause sources to refrain from giving such information because of fear of reprisal, or fear of breach of promises of anonymity and confidentiality. This could compromise the ability to conduct investigations and to identify, detect and apprehend violators. Even though the agency has claimed an exemption from this particular requirement, it still plans to generally identify the categories of records and the sources for these records in this system. However, for the reasons stated in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section, this exemption is still being cited in the event an individual wants to know a specific source of information.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual that is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or Executive order. These systems of records are exempt from the foregoing provisions because:

(A) It is not possible to detect the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of a criminal or other investigation.

(B) Relevance and necessity are questions of judgment and timing. What ap-

pears relevant and necessary may ultimately be determined to be unnecessary. It is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established.

(C) In any investigation the Inspector General may obtain information concerning the violations of laws other than those within the scope of his/her jurisdiction. In the interest of effective law enforcement, the Inspector General should retain this information as it may aid in establishing patterns of criminal activity and provide leads for those law enforcement agencies charged with enforcing other segments of civil or criminal law.

(v) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(2) requires an agency to collect information to the greatest extent practicable directly from the subject individual when the information may result in adverse determinations about an individual's rights, benefits, and privileges under Federal programs. The application of this provision would impair investigations of illegal acts, violations of the rules of conduct, merit system and any other misconduct for the following reasons:

(A) In order to successfully verify a complaint, most information about a complainant or an individual under investigation must be obtained from third parties such as witnesses and informers. It is not feasible to rely upon the subject of the investigation as a source for information regarding his/her activities because of the subject's rights against self-incrimination and because of the inherent unreliability of the suspect's statements. Similarly, it is not always feasible to rely upon the complainant as a source of information regarding his/her involvement in an investigation.

(B) The subject of an investigation will be alerted to the existence of an investigation if an attempt is made to obtain information from the subject. This would afford the individual the opportunity to conceal any criminal activities to avoid apprehension.

(vi) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(3) requires that an agency must inform the subject of an investigation who is asked to supply information of:

(A) The authority under which the information is sought and whether disclosure of the information is mandatory or voluntary;

(B) The purposes for which the information is intended to be used;

(C) The routine uses which may be made of the information; and

(D) The effects on the subject, if any, of not providing the requested information. The reasons for exempting this system of records from the foregoing provision are as follows:

(1) The disclosure to the subject of the purposes of the investigation as stated in paragraph (b)(3)(vi)(B) of this paragraph would provide the subject with substantial information relating to the nature of the investigation and could impede or compromise the investigation.

(2) If the complainant or the subject were informed of the information required by this provision, it could seriously interfere with undercover activities requiring disclosure of the authority under which the information is being requested. This could conceivably jeopardize undercover agents' identities and impair their safety, as well as impair the successful conclusion of the investigation.

(3) Individuals may be contacted during preliminary information gathering in investigations before any individual is identified as the subject of an investigation. Informing the individual of the matters required by this provision would hinder or adversely affect any present or subsequent investigations.

(vii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(5) requires that records be maintained with such accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and completeness as is reasonably necessary to assure fairness to the individual in making any determination about an individual. Since the law defines *maintain* to include the collection of information, complying with this provision would prevent the collection of any data not shown to be accurate, relevant, timely, and complete at the moment of its collection. In gathering information during the course of an investigation it is not always possible to determine this prior to collection of the information. Facts are first gathered and then placed into a logical order which objectively proves or dis-

proves criminal behavior on the part of the suspect. Material which may seem unrelated, irrelevant, incomplete, untimely, etc., may take on added meaning as an investigation progresses. The restrictions in this provision could interfere with the preparation of a complete investigative report.

(viii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(8) requires an agency to make reasonable efforts to serve notice on an individual when any record on such individual is made available to any person under compulsory legal process when such process becomes a matter of public record. The notice requirement of this provision could prematurely reveal an ongoing criminal investigation to the subject of the investigation.

(c) *Exemption of Loan Guaranty Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Systems of Records.* The Department of Veterans Affairs provides limited access to Loan Guaranty Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, systems of records as indicated:

(1) The following systems of records are exempted pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) from subsections (c)(3), (d), (e)(1) and (e)(4) (G), (H) and (I) and (f):

(i) Loan Guaranty Fee Personnel and Program Participant Records—VA (17VA26); and

(ii) Loan Guaranty Home Condominium and Mobile Home Applicant Records and Paraplegic Grant Application Records—VA (55VA26).

(2) These exemptions apply to the extent that information in these systems is subject to exemption pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2).

(3) For the reasons set forth, the systems of records listed under paragraph (c)(1) of this section are exempted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) from the following provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires that an agency make accountings of disclosures of records available to individuals named in the records at their request. These accountings must state the date, nature and purpose of each disclosure of the record and the name and address of the recipient. The application of this provision would alert subjects of an investigation to the existence of the investigation and that

such persons are subjects of that investigation. Since release of such information to subjects of an investigation would provide the subjects with significant information concerning the nature of the investigation, it could result in the altering or destruction of documentary evidence, improper influencing of witnesses and other activities that could impede or compromise the investigation.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d), (e)(4) (G) and (H) and (f) relate to an individual's right to be notified of the existence of records pertaining to such individual; requirements for identifying an individual who requests access to records; and the agency procedures relating to access to records and the contest of information contained in such records. This system is exempt from the foregoing provisions for the following reasons: To notify an individual at the individual's request of the existence of records in an investigative file pertaining to such individual or to grant access to an investigative file could interfere with investigative and enforcement proceedings; constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of others; disclose the identity of confidential sources and reveal confidential information supplied by these sources and disclose investigative techniques and procedures.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4)(I) requires the publication of the categories of sources of records in each system of records. The application of this provision could disclose investigative techniques and procedures and cause sources to refrain from giving such information because of fear of reprisal, or fear of breach of promises of anonymity and confidentiality. This would compromise the ability to conduct investigations. Even though the agency has claimed an exemption from this particular requirement, it still plans to generally identify the categories of records and the sources for these records in this system. However, for the reasons stated above, this exemption is still being cited in the event an individual wanted to know a specific source of information.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual

that is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or Executive order. This system of records is exempt from the foregoing provision because:

(A) It is not possible to detect relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of an investigation.

(B) Relevance and necessity are questions of judgment and timing. What appears relevant and necessary when collected may ultimately be determined to be unnecessary. It is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established.

(C) In interviewing persons or obtaining other forms of evidence during an investigation, information may be supplied to the investigator which relates to matters incidental to the main purpose of the investigation but which is appropriate in a thorough investigation. Oftentimes, such information cannot readily be segregated.

(4) The following system of records is exempt pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5) from subsections (c)(3), (d), (e)(1), (e)(4) (G), (H) and (I) and (f): Loan Guaranty Fee Personnel and Program Participant Records—VA (17 VA 26).

(5) This exemption applies to the extent that information in this system is subject to exemption pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5).

(6) For the reasons set forth, the system of records listed in paragraph (c)(4) of this section is exempt under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5) from the following provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552a:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires that an agency make accountings of disclosures of records available to individuals named in the records at their request. These accountings must state the date, nature and purpose of each disclosure of the record and the name and address of the recipient. The application of this provision would alert subjects of background suitability investigations to the existence of the investigation and reveal that such persons are subjects of that investigation. Since release of such information to subjects of an investigation would provide the subjects with significant information concerning the nature of the

investigation, it could result in revealing the identity of a confidential source.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d), (e)(4) (G) and (H) and (f) relate to an individual's right to be notified of the existence of records pertaining to such individual; requirements for identifying an individual who requests access to records; and the agency procedures relating to access to records and the contest of information contained in such records. This system is exempt from the foregoing provisions for the following reasons: To notify an individual at the individual's request of the existence of records in an investigative file pertaining to such an individual or to grant access to an investigative file would disclose the identity of confidential sources and reveal confidential information supplied by these sources.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4)(I) requires the publication of the categories of sources of records in each system of records. The application of this provision could disclose sufficient information to disclose the identity of a confidential source and cause sources to refrain from giving such information because of fear of reprisal, or fear of breach of promises of anonymity and confidentiality. This would compromise the ability to conduct background suitability investigations.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual that is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or Executive order. This system of records is exempt from the foregoing provision because:

(A) It is not possible to detect relevance and necessity of specific information from a confidential source in the early stages of an investigation.

(B) Relevance and necessity are questions of judgment and timing. What appears relevant and necessary when collected may ultimately be determined to be unnecessary. It is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established regarding suitability for VA approval as a fee appraiser or compliance inspector.

(C) In interviewing persons or obtaining other forms of evidence during an

investigation for suitability for VA approval, information may be supplied to the investigator which relates to matters incidental to the main purpose of the investigation but which is appropriate in a thorough investigation. Oftentimes, such information cannot readily be segregated and disclosure might jeopardize the identity of a confidential source.

(d) *Exemption of Police and Security Records.* VA provides limited access to one Security and Law Enforcement System of Records, Police and Security Records—VA (103VA07B).

(1) The investigations records and reports contained in this System of Records are exempted [pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2) of the Privacy Act of 1974] from Privacy Act subsections (c)(3) and (c)(4); (d); (e)(1) through (e)(3), (e)(4)(G) through (e)(4)(I), (e)(5), and (e)(8); (f); and (g); in addition, they are exempted [pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) of the Privacy Act of 1974] from Privacy Act subsections (c)(3); (d); (e)(1), (e)(4)(G) through (e)(4)(I); and (f).

(2) These records contained in the Police and Security Records—VA (103VA076B) are exempted for the following reasons:

(i) The application of Privacy Act subsection (c)(3) would alert subjects to the existence of the investigation and reveal that they are subjects of that investigation. Providing subjects with information concerning the nature of the investigation could result in alteration or destruction of evidence which is obtained from third parties, improper influencing of witnesses, and other activities that could impede or compromise the investigation.

(ii) The application of Privacy Act subsections (c)(4); (d); (e)(4)(G) and (e)(4)(H); (f); and (g) could interfere with investigative and enforcement proceedings, threaten the safety of individuals who have cooperated with authorities, constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy of others, disclose the identity of confidential sources, reveal confidential information supplied by these sources, and disclose investigative techniques and procedures.

(iii) The application of Privacy Act subsection (e)(4)(I) could disclose investigative techniques and procedures and cause sources to refrain from giving such information because of fear of reprisal, or fear of breach of promises of anonymity and confidentiality. This could compromise the ability to conduct investigations and to identify, detect and apprehend violators. Even though the agency has claimed an exemption from this particular requirement, it still plans to generally identify the categories of records and the sources of these records in this system. However, for the reason stated in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section, this exemption is still being cited in the event an individual wants to know a specific source of information.

(iv) These records contained in the Police and Security Records—VA (103VA076B) are exempt from Privacy Act subsection (e)(1) because it is not possible to detect the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of a criminal or other investigation. Relevance and necessity are questions of judgment and timing. What appears relevant and necessary may ultimately be determined to be unnecessary. It is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established. In any investigation, the Office of Security and Law Enforcement may obtain information concerning violations of laws other than those within the scope of its jurisdiction. In the interest of effective law enforcement, the Office of Security and Law Enforcement should retain this information as it may aid in establishing patterns of criminal activity and provide leads for those law enforcement agencies charged with enforcing other segments of civil or criminal law.

(v) The application of Privacy Act subsection (e)(2) would impair investigations of illegal acts, violations of the rules of conduct, merit system and any other misconduct for the following reasons:

(A) In order to successfully verify a complaint, most information about a complainant or an individual under investigation must be obtained from third parties such as witnesses and informers. It is not feasible to rely upon

the subject of the investigation as a source for information regarding his/her activities because of the subject's rights against self-incrimination and because of the inherent unreliability of the suspect's statements. Similarly, it is not always feasible to rely upon the complainant as a source of information regarding his/her involvement in an investigation.

(B) The subject of an investigation will be alerted to the existence of an investigation if an attempt is made to obtain information from the subject. This would afford the individual the opportunity to conceal any criminal activities to avoid apprehension.

(vi) The reasons for exempting these records in the Police and Security Records—VA (103VA07B) from Privacy Act subsection (e)(3) are as follows:

(A) The disclosure to the subject of the purposes of the investigation would provide the subject with substantial information relating to the nature of the investigation and could impede or compromise the investigation.

(B) Informing the complainant or the subject of the information required by this provision could seriously interfere with undercover activities, jeopardize the identities of undercover agents and impair their safety, and impair the successful conclusion of the investigation.

(C) Individuals may be contacted during preliminary information gathering in investigations before any individual is identified as the subject of an investigation. Informing the individual of the matters required by this provision would hinder or adversely affect any present or subsequent investigations.

(vii) Since the Privacy Act defines "maintain" to include the collection of information, complying with subsection (e)(5) would prevent the collection of any data not shown to be accurate, relevant, timely, and complete at the moment of its collection. In gathering information during the course of an investigation, it is not always possible to make this determination prior to collecting the information. Facts are first gathered and then placed into a logical order which objectively proves or disproves criminal behavior on the part of the suspect. Material that may seem unrelated, irrelevant, incomplete, untimely, etc., may take

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on added meaning as an investigation progresses. The restrictions in this provision could interfere with the preparation of a complete investigative report.

(viii) The notice requirement of Privacy Act subsection (e)(8) could prematurely reveal an ongoing criminal investigation to the subject of the investigation.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552a (j) and (k); 38 U.S.C. 501)

[48 FR 29847, June 29, 1983, as amended at 68 FR 35298, June 13, 2003]

§§ 1.583–1.584 [Reserved]

INVENTIONS BY EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.650 to 1.666 issued under sect. 1, 66 Stat. 811, 72 Stat. 1114; 35 U.S.C. 266; 15 U.S.C. 3710a; 38 U.S.C. 501; E.O. 10096, E.O. 10930, 15 FR 389; 3 CFR 1949–1953 Comp.

EXPANDED REMOTE ACCESS TO COMPUT- ERIZED VETERANS CLAIMS RECORDS BY ACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVES

§ 1.600 Purpose.

(a) Sections 1.600 through 1.603 establish policy, assign responsibilities and prescribe procedures with respect to:

(1) When, and under what circumstances, VA will grant authorized claimants' representatives read-only access to the automated Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) claims records of those claimants whom they represent;

(2) The exercise of authorized access by claimants' representatives; and

(3) The bases and procedures for disqualification of a representative for violating any of the requirements for access.

(b) VBA will grant access to its automated claimants' claims records from locations outside Regional Offices under the following conditions. Access will be provided:

(1) Only to individuals and organizations granted access to automated claimants' records under §§1.600 through 1.603;

(2) Only to the claims records of VA claimants whom the organization or individual represents as reflected in the claims file;

(3) Solely for the purpose of the representative assisting the individual claimant whose records are accessed in a claim for benefits administered by VA; and

(4) On a read-only basis. Individuals authorized access to VBA automated claims records under §§1.600 through 1.603 will not be permitted to modify the data.

(c)(1) Access will be authorized only to the inquiry commands of the Benefits Delivery Network which provide access to the following categories of data:

(i) Beneficiary identification data such as name, social security number, sex, date of birth, service number and related service data; and

(ii) Claims history and processing data such as folder location, claim status, claim establishment date, claim processing history, award data, rating data, including service-connected medical conditions, income data, dependency data, deduction data, payment data, educational facility and program data (except chapter 32 benefits), and education program contribution and delimiting data (except chapter 32 benefits).

(2) Access to this information will currently be through the inquiry commands of BINQ (BIRLS (Beneficiaries Identification and Records Location Subsystem) Inquiry), SINQ (Status Inquiry), MINQ (Master Record Inquiry), PINQ (Pending Issue Inquiry) and TINQ (Payment History Inquiry). The identifying information received from BIRLS to representative inquiries will be limited to file number, veteran's name, date of death, folder location and transfer date of folder, insurance number, insurance type, insurance lapse date and insurance folder jurisdiction.

(d) Sections 1.600 through 14.603 are not intended to, and do not:

(1) Waive the sovereign immunity of the United States; or

(2) Create, and may not be relied upon to create, any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law against the United States or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

[59 FR 47084, Sept. 14, 1994. Redesignated and amended at 73 FR 29870, 29879, May 22, 2008]