

prosecutor" in chapter heading and in items 592, 594, and 596.

§ 591. Applicability of provisions of this chapter

(a) PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN COVERED PERSONS.—The Attorney General shall conduct a preliminary investigation in accordance with section 592 whenever the Attorney General receives information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate whether any person described in subsection (b) may have violated any Federal criminal law other than a violation classified as a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction.

(b) PERSONS TO WHOM SUBSECTION (a) APPLIES.—The persons referred to in subsection (a) are—

- (1) the President and Vice President;
- (2) any individual serving in a position listed in section 5312 of title 5;
- (3) any individual working in the Executive Office of the President who is compensated at a rate of pay at or above level II of the Executive Schedule under section 5313 of title 5;

(4) any Assistant Attorney General and any individual working in the Department of Justice who is compensated at a rate of pay at or above level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5;

(5) the Director of Central Intelligence, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue;

(6) the chairman and treasurer of the principal national campaign committee seeking the election or reelection of the President, and any officer of that committee exercising authority at the national level, during the incumbency of the President; and

(7) any individual who held an office or position described in paragraph (1), (2), (3), (4), or (5) for 1 year after leaving the office or position.

(c) PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION WITH RESPECT TO OTHER PERSONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—When the Attorney General determines that an investigation or prosecution of a person by the Department of Justice may result in a personal, financial, or political conflict of interest, the Attorney General may conduct a preliminary investigation of such person in accordance with section 592 if the Attorney General receives information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate whether that person may have violated Federal criminal law other than a violation classified as a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction.

(2) MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.—When the Attorney General determines that it would be in the public interest, the Attorney General may conduct a preliminary investigation in accordance with section 592 if the Attorney General receives information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate whether a Member of Congress may have violated any Federal criminal law other than a violation classified as a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction.

(d) EXAMINATION OF INFORMATION TO DETERMINE NEED FOR PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION.—

(1) FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED.—In determining under subsection (a) or (c) (or section 592(c)(2)) whether grounds to investigate exist, the Attorney General shall consider only—

- (A) the specificity of the information received; and
- (B) the credibility of the source of the information.

(2) TIME PERIOD FOR MAKING DETERMINATION.—The Attorney General shall determine whether grounds to investigate exist not later than 30 days after the information is first received. If within that 30-day period the Attorney General determines that the information is not specific or is not from a credible source, then the Attorney General shall close the matter. If within that 30-day period the Attorney General determines that the information is specific and from a credible source, the Attorney General shall, upon making that determination, commence a preliminary investigation with respect to that information. If the Attorney General is unable to determine, within that 30-day period, whether the information is specific and from a credible source, the Attorney General shall, at the end of that 30-day period, commence a preliminary investigation with respect to that information.

(e) RECUSAL OF ATTORNEY GENERAL.—

(1) WHEN RECUSAL IS REQUIRED.—(A) If information received under this chapter involves the Attorney General, the next most senior official in the Department of Justice who is not also recused shall perform the duties assigned under this chapter to the Attorney General.

(B) If information received under this chapter involves a person with whom the Attorney General has a personal or financial relationship, the Attorney General shall recuse himself or herself by designating the next most senior official in the Department of Justice who is not also recused to perform the duties assigned under this chapter to the Attorney General.

(2) REQUIREMENTS FOR RECUSAL DETERMINATION.—Before personally making any other determination under this chapter with respect to information received under this chapter, the Attorney General shall determine under paragraph (1)(B) whether recusal is necessary. The Attorney General shall set forth this determination in writing, identify the facts considered by the Attorney General, and set forth the reasons for the recusal. The Attorney General shall file this determination with any notification or application submitted to the division of the court under this chapter with respect to such information.

(Added Pub. L. 95-521, title VI, § 601(a), Oct. 26, 1978, 92 Stat. 1867; amended Pub. L. 97-409, §§3, 4(a), Jan. 3, 1983, 96 Stat. 2039, 2040; Pub. L. 98-473, title II, § 228(b), Oct. 12, 1984, 98 Stat. 2030; Pub. L. 100-191, §2, Dec. 15, 1987, 101 Stat. 1293; Pub. L. 103-270, §§3(j), (k), 4, June 30, 1994, 108 Stat. 735, 736.)

AMENDMENTS

1994—Subsec. (b)(6) to (8). Pub. L. 103-270, §4(b), redesignated par. (8) as (6) and substituted “; and” for the period at end, added par. (7), and struck out former pars. (6) and (7) which read as follows:

“(6) any individual who leaves any office or position described in any of paragraphs (1) through (5) of this subsection, during the incumbency of the President under whom such individual served in the office or position plus one year after such incumbency, but in no event longer than a period of three years after the individual leaves the office or position;

“(7) any individual who held an office or position described in any of paragraphs (1) through (5) of this subsection during the incumbency of one President and who continued to hold the office or position for not more than 90 days into the term of the next President, during the 1-year period after the individual leaves the office or position; and”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 103–270, §4(a), amended subsec. (c) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (c) read as follows: “PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS NOT LISTED IN SUBSECTION (b).—The Attorney General may conduct a preliminary investigation in accordance with section 592 if—

“(1) the Attorney General receives information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate whether any person other than a person described in subsection (b) may have violated any Federal criminal law other than a violation classified as a Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction; and

“(2) the Attorney General determines that an investigation or prosecution of the person, with respect to the information received, by the Attorney General or other officer of the Department of Justice may result in a personal, financial, or political conflict of interest.”

Subsec. (d)(2). Pub. L. 103–270, §3(j), substituted “30” for “15” wherever appearing.

Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 103–270, §3(k), amended subsec. (e) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (e) read as follows: “(e) RECUSAL OF ATTORNEY GENERAL.—

“(1) WHEN RECUSAL IS REQUIRED.—If information received under this chapter involves the Attorney General or a person with whom the Attorney General has a current or recent personal or financial relationship, the Attorney General shall recuse himself or herself by designating the next most senior officer in the Department of Justice whom that information does not involve and who does not have a current or recent personal or financial relationship with such person to perform the duties assigned under this chapter to the Attorney General with respect to that information.

“(2) REQUIREMENTS FOR RECUSAL DETERMINATION.—The Attorney General shall, before personally making any other determination under this chapter with respect to information received under this chapter, determine under paragraph (1) whether to recuse himself or herself with respect to that information. A determination to recuse shall be in writing, shall identify the facts considered by the Attorney General, and shall set forth the reasons for the recusal. The Attorney General shall file this determination with any notification or application submitted to the division of the court under this chapter with respect to the information involved.”

1987—Pub. L. 100–191 amended section generally, substituting subsecs. (a) to (e) relating to applicability of chapter for former subsecs. (a) to (c) relating to similar subject.

1984—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 98–473 substituted “Class B or C misdemeanor or an infraction” for “petty offense”.

1983—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 97–409, §4(a)(1), substituted “information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate” for “specific information” after “the Attorney General receives”.

Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 97–409, §3, substituted “who is compensated at or above a rate equivalent to level II” for “and compensated at a rate not less than the annual rate of basic pay provided for level IV”.

Subsec. (b)(4), (5). Pub. L. 97–409, §3, redesignated as par. (5) “the Director of Central Intelligence” and all that followed through end of par. (4). Former par. (5) redesignated (6).

Subsec. (b)(6). Pub. L. 97–409, §3, redesignated former par. (5) as (6) and substituted “through (5) of this subsection during the period consisting of the incumbency of the President such individual serves plus one year after such incumbency, but in no event longer than two years after the individual leaves office;” for “through (4) of this subsection during the incumbency of the President or during the period the last preceding President held office, if such preceding President was of the same political party as the incumbent President; and”. Former par. (6) redesignated (8).

Subsec. (b)(7). Pub. L. 97–409, §3, added par. (7).

Subsec. (b)(8). Pub. L. 97–409, §3, redesignated former par. (6) as (8) and substituted “the chairman and treasurer of the principal national campaign committee seeking the election or reelection of the President, and any officer of the campaign exercising authority at the national level, such as the campaign manager or director, during the incumbency of the President” for “any officer of the principal national campaign committee seeking the election or reelection of the President”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 97–409, §4(a)(2), added subsec. (c).

CHANGE OF NAME

Reference to the Director of Central Intelligence or the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Director’s capacity as the head of the intelligence community deemed to be a reference to the Director of National Intelligence. Reference to the Director of Central Intelligence or the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Director’s capacity as the head of the Central Intelligence Agency deemed to be a reference to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. See section 1081(a), (b) of Pub. L. 108–458, set out as a note under section 3001 of Title 50, War and National Defense.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1994 AMENDMENT; TRANSITION PROVISIONS

Pub. L. 103–270, §7, June 30, 1994, 108 Stat. 737, provided that:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this section, the amendments made by this Act [amending this section and sections 592 to 596 and 599 of this title] shall apply with respect to independent counsels appointed before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act [June 30, 1994].

“(b) ASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEE TO CERTIFY EXPENDITURES.—An independent counsel appointed prior to the date of enactment of this Act shall assign to an employee the duty of certifying expenditures, as required by section 594(l) of title 28, United States Code, as added by section 3(a), by the date that is 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

“(c) OFFICE SPACE.—The Administrator of General Services, in applying section 594(l)(3) of title 28, United States Code, as added by section 3(a), to determine whether the office of an independent counsel appointed prior to the date of enactment of this Act should be moved to a Federal building, shall take into account the moving, legal, and other expenses that might arise if the office were moved.

“(d) TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES.—For purposes of the restrictions on reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses of an independent counsel and employees of an office of independent counsel contained in paragraph (3) of section 594(b) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by section 3(b), as applied to the office of an independent counsel appointed before the date of enactment of this Act, the 1-year service period shall begin on the date of enactment of this Act.

“(e) RATES OF COMPENSATION.—The limitation on rates of compensation of employees of an office of independent counsel contained in the last sentence of section 594(c) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by section 3(c), shall not be applied to cause a reduction in the rate of compensation of an employee appointed before the date of enactment of this Act.

“(f) PERIODIC REAPPOINTMENT.—The determinations by the division of the court contained in the last sentence of section 596(b)(2) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by section 3(h), shall, for the office of an independent counsel appointed before the date of enactment of this Act, be required no later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act and at the end of each succeeding 1-year period.

“(g) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—No amendment made by this Act that establishes or modifies a requirement that any person submit a report to any other person with respect to an activity occurring during any time period shall be construed to require that a report submitted prior to the date of enactment of this Act, with respect to that time period be supplemented to include information with respect to such activity.

“(h) REGULATORY INDEPENDENT COUNSEL.—Notwithstanding the restriction in section 593(b)(2) of title 28, United States Code, the division of the court described in section 49 of that title may appoint as an independent counsel any individual who, on the date of enactment of this Act, is serving as a regulatory independent counsel under parts 600 and 603 of title 28, Code of Federal Regulations. If such an individual is so appointed, such an independent counsel shall comply with chapter 40 of title 28, United States Code, as amended by this Act, in the same manner and to the same extent as an independent counsel appointed before the date of enactment of this Act is required to comply with that chapter, except that subsection (f) of this section shall not apply to such an independent counsel.

“(i) WHITE HOUSE PERSONNEL REPORT.—Section 6 [enacting provisions set out as a note under section 113 of Title 3, The President] shall take effect on January 1, 1995.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1987 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 100-191, § 6, Dec. 15, 1987, 101 Stat. 1307, provided that:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), the amendments made by this Act [enacting section 599 of this title, amending this section, sections 49 and 592 to 598 of this title, sections 203 and 205 of Pub. L. 95-521 set out in the Appendix to Title 5, Government Organization and Employees, and section 202 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure, enacting provisions set out as a note under section 1 of this title, and amending provisions set out below] take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 15, 1987].

“(b) PENDING PROCEEDINGS.—With respect to any proceeding under chapter 39 of title 28, United States Code (before the redesignation of such chapter as chapter 40 by section 144(g) of Public Law 99-554), or under chapter 40 of such title (after such redesignation), which is pending on the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 15, 1987], the following shall apply:

“(1) Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), the provisions of chapter 40 of such title as in effect on the day before such date of enactment shall, in lieu of the amendments made by this Act, continue to apply on or after such date to such proceeding until such proceeding is terminated in accordance with such chapter.

“(2) The following provisions shall apply to such proceeding on or after such date of enactment:

“(A) Section 593(f) of title 28, United States Code, as amended by section 2 of this Act, relating to the award of attorneys' fees.

“(B) Section 594(d)(2) of such title, as added by section 2 of this Act, to the extent that such section 594(d)(2) relates to reports by the Attorney General on expenditures by independent counsel, except that the first such report shall be made only with respect to expenditures on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

“(C) Section 594(h)(1)(A) of such title, as added by section 2 of this Act, relating to reports by independent counsel, except that the 6-month periods described in such section 594(h)(1)(A) shall be calculated from the date of the enactment of this Act.

“(D) Section 594(i) of such title, as added by section 2 of this Act, relating to the independence of the office of independent counsel for certain purposes.

“(E) Section 594(k) of such title, as added by section 2 of this Act, relating to custody of records of independent counsel.

“(F) Section 596(a)(3) of such title, as amended by section 2 of this Act, relating to judicial review of the removal of an independent counsel from office.

“(G) Section 596(c) of such title, as added by section 2 of this Act, relating to audits of expenditures of independent counsel.

“(H) The amendments made by section 3 of this Act [amending sections 203 and 205 of Pub. L. 95-521, set out in Appendix to Title 5, and section 202 of Title 18], relating to the status of independent counsel and their appointees as special government employees and to their financial disclosure requirements.

“(3) Section 594(j) of title 28, United States Code, as added by section 2 of this Act, relating to certain standards of conduct shall, 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, apply to a pending proceeding described in this subsection.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1984 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 98-473, title II, § 235(a)(1)(B)(ii)(IV), Oct. 12, 1984, 98 Stat. 2032, provided that the amendment made by Pub. L. 98-473 is effective Oct. 12, 1984.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 95-521, title VI, § 604, Oct. 26, 1978, 92 Stat. 1875, provided that: “Except as provided in this section, the amendments made by this title [enacting this chapter and sections 49, 528, and 529 of this title] shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 26, 1978]. The provisions of chapter 39 of title 28 of the United States Code, as added by section 601 of this Act, shall not apply to specific information received by the Attorney General pursuant to section 591 of such title 28, if the Attorney General determines that—

“(1) such specific information is directly related to a prosecution pending at the time such specific information is received by the Attorney General;

“(2) such specific information is related to a matter which has been presented to a grand jury and is received by the Attorney General within one hundred and eighty days of the date of the enactment of this Act; or

“(3) such specific information is related to an investigation that is pending at the time such specific information is received by the Attorney General, and such specific information is received by the Attorney General within ninety days of the date of the enactment of this Act.”

PERMANENT APPROPRIATION FOR EXPENSES OF INDEPENDENT COUNSELS

Pub. L. 100-202, § 101(a) [title II], Dec. 22, 1987, 101 Stat. 1329, 1329-9, as amended by Pub. L. 111-68, div. A, title I, § 1501(d), Oct. 1, 2009, 123 Stat. 2041, provided: “That a permanent indefinite appropriation is established within the Department of Justice to pay all necessary expenses of investigations and prosecutions by independent counsel appointed pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. 591 et seq. or other law”.

CONTINGENCY FUND FOR INDEPENDENT COUNSELS

Pub. L. 95-521, title VI, § 601(c), Oct. 26, 1978, 92 Stat. 1873, as amended by Pub. L. 97-409, § 2(c)(2), Jan. 3, 1983, 96 Stat. 2039; Pub. L. 100-191, § 5(b), Dec. 15, 1987, 101 Stat. 1307, provided that: “There are authorized to be appropriated for each fiscal year such sums as may be necessary, to be held by the Department of Justice as a contingent fund for the use of any independent counsels appointed under chapter 40 (relating to independent counsels) of title 28 of the United States Code in the carrying out of functions under such chapter.”

§ 592. Preliminary investigation and application for appointment of an independent counsel

(a) CONDUCT OF PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A preliminary investigation conducted under this chapter shall be of such matters as the Attorney General considers appropriate in order to make a determination, under subsection (b) or (c), on whether further investigation is warranted, with respect to each potential violation, or allegation of a violation, of criminal law. The Attorney General shall make such determination not later than 90 days after the preliminary investigation is commenced, except that, in the case of a preliminary investigation commenced after a congressional request under subsection (g), the Attorney General shall make such determination not later than 90 days after the request is received. The Attorney General shall promptly notify the division of the court specified in section 593(a) of the commencement of such preliminary investigation and the date of such commencement.

(2) LIMITED AUTHORITY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL.—(A) In conducting preliminary investigations under this chapter, the Attorney General shall have no authority to convene grand juries, plea bargain, grant immunity, or issue subpoenas.

(B)(i) The Attorney General shall not base a determination under this chapter that information with respect to a violation of criminal law by a person is not specific and from a credible source upon a determination that such person lacked the state of mind required for the violation of criminal law.

(ii) The Attorney General shall not base a determination under this chapter that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that further investigation is warranted, upon a determination that such person lacked the state of mind required for the violation of criminal law involved, unless there is clear and convincing evidence that the person lacked such state of mind.

(3) EXTENSION OF TIME FOR PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION.—The Attorney General may apply to the division of the court for a single extension, for a period of not more than 60 days, of the 90-day period referred to in paragraph (1). The division of the court may, upon a showing of good cause, grant such extension.

(b) DETERMINATION THAT FURTHER INVESTIGATION NOT WARRANTED.—

(1) NOTIFICATION OF DIVISION OF THE COURT.—If the Attorney General, upon completion of a preliminary investigation under this chapter, determines that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that further investigation is warranted, the Attorney General shall promptly so notify the division of the court, and the division of the court shall have no power to appoint an independent counsel with respect to the matters involved.

(2) FORM OF NOTIFICATION.—Such notification shall contain a summary of the information received and a summary of the results of the preliminary investigation.

(c) DETERMINATION THAT FURTHER INVESTIGATION IS WARRANTED.—

(1) APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT COUNSEL.—The Attorney General shall apply to the division of the court for the appointment of an independent counsel if—

(A) the Attorney General, upon completion of a preliminary investigation under this chapter, determines that there are reasonable grounds to believe that further investigation is warranted; or

(B) the 90-day period referred to in subsection (a)(1), and any extension granted under subsection (a)(3), have elapsed and the Attorney General has not filed a notification with the division of the court under subsection (b)(1).

In determining under this chapter whether reasonable grounds exist to warrant further investigation, the Attorney General shall comply with the written or other established policies of the Department of Justice with respect to the conduct of criminal investigations.

(2) RECEIPT OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—If, after submitting a notification under subsection (b)(1), the Attorney General receives additional information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate the matters to which such notification related, the Attorney General shall—

(A) conduct such additional preliminary investigation as the Attorney General considers appropriate for a period of not more than 90 days after the date on which such additional information is received; and

(B) otherwise comply with the provisions of this section with respect to such additional preliminary investigation to the same extent as any other preliminary investigation under this section.

(d) CONTENTS OF APPLICATION.—Any application for the appointment of an independent counsel under this chapter shall contain sufficient information to assist the division of the court in selecting an independent counsel and in defining that independent counsel's prosecutorial jurisdiction so that the independent counsel has adequate authority to fully investigate and prosecute the subject matter and all matters related to that subject matter.

(e) DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.—Except as otherwise provided in this chapter or as is deemed necessary for law enforcement purposes, no officer or employee of the Department of Justice or an office of independent counsel may, without leave of the division of the court, disclose to any individual outside the Department of Justice or such office any notification, application, or any other document, materials, or memorandum supplied to the division of the court under this chapter. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as authorizing the withholding of information from the Congress.

(f) LIMITATION ON JUDICIAL REVIEW.—The Attorney General's determination under this chapter to apply to the division of the court for the appointment of an independent counsel shall not be reviewable in any court.

(g) CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST.—

(1) BY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OR MEMBERS THEREOF.—The Committee on the Judiciary of