

less of the authority under which the employee was hired.

(f) TERMINATION.—This section shall terminate on September 30, 2027.

(Added Pub. L. 117-168, title IX, §907, Aug. 10, 2022, 136 Stat. 1814.)

#### Editorial Notes

##### PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 704 was renumbered section 1904 of this title.

#### § 705. Telephone service for medical officers and facility directors

The Secretary may pay for official telephone service and rental in the field whenever incurred in case of official telephones for directors of centers, hospitals, independent clinics, domiciliaries, and medical officers of the Department where such telephones are installed in private residences or private apartments or quarters, when authorized under regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

(Added Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 395.)

#### Editorial Notes

##### PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 705 was renumbered section 1905 of this title.

Provisions similar to those in this section were contained in section 234 of this title prior to repeal by Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a).

#### § 706. Additional authority relating to recruitment and retention of personnel

(a) RECRUITMENT AND RELOCATION BONUSES.—The Secretary may pay a recruitment or relocation bonus under section 5753(e) of title 5 without regard to any requirements for certification or approval under that section.

(b) RETENTION BONUSES.—(1) The Secretary may pay a retention bonus under section 5754(f) of title 5 without regard to any requirement for certification or approval under that subsection.

(2) The Secretary may pay a retention bonus as specified in subsection (e)(2) of section 5754 of title 5 and may pay the bonus as a single lump-sum payment at the beginning of the full period of service required by an agreement under subsection (d) of such section.

(c) MERIT AWARDS.—The Secretary may grant a cash award under section 4502(b) of title 5 without regard to any requirement for certification or approval under that section.

(d) INCENTIVES FOR CRITICAL SKILLS.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, the Secretary may provide a critical skill incentive to an employee in a case in which the Secretary determines—

(A) the employee possesses a high-demand skill or skill that is at a shortage;

(B) such skill is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the employee's position; and

(C) employment of an individual with such skill in such position serves a critical mission-related need of the Department.

(2) An incentive provided to an employee under paragraph (1) may not to<sup>1</sup> exceed 25 percent of the basic pay of the employee.

(3) Provision of an incentive under paragraph (1) shall be contingent on the employee entering into a written agreement to complete a period of employment with the Department.

(4) An incentive provided under paragraph (1) shall not be considered basic pay for any purpose.

(5) The Secretary may prescribe conditions, including with respect to eligibility, and limitations on provision of incentive<sup>2</sup> under paragraph (1).

(6) Incentive<sup>3</sup> provided under paragraph (1) shall not be included in the calculation of total amount of compensation under section 7431(e)(4) of this title.

(e) STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, the Secretary may repay a student loan pursuant to section 5379(b) of title 5.

(2) Paragraph (2) of such section shall not apply to payment under this subsection.

(3) Payment under this subsection shall be made subject to such terms, limitations, or conditions as may be mutually agreed to by the Secretary and the employee concerned, except that the amount paid by the Secretary under this subsection may not exceed—

(A) \$40,000 for any employee in any calendar year; or

(B) a total of \$100,000 in the case of any employee.

(f) EXPEDITED HIRING AUTHORITY FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES; COMPETITIVE SERVICE.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Secretary may expedite hiring for college graduates under section 3115 of title 5 without regard to subsection (e) of such section or any regulations prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management for administration of such subsection.

(2) The number of employees the Secretary may appoint under section 3115 of title 5 may not exceed the number equal to 25 percent of individuals that the Secretary appointed during the previous fiscal year to a position in the competitive service classified in a professional or administrative occupational category, at the GS-11 level, or an equivalent level, or below, under a competitive examining procedure.

(g) EXPEDITED HIRING AUTHORITY FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS; COMPETITIVE SERVICE.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Secretary may expedite hiring of post-secondary students under section 3116 of title 5, without regard to subsection (d) of such section or any regulations prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management for administration of such subsection.

(2) The number of employees the Secretary may appoint under section 3116 of title 5 may not exceed the number equal to 25 percent of the number of students that the Secretary appointed during the previous fiscal year to a position at the GS-11 level, or an equivalent level, or below.

<sup>1</sup> So in original. The word "to" probably should not appear.

<sup>2</sup> So in original. Probably should be preceded by "an".

<sup>3</sup> So in original. Probably should be "An incentive".