

The Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, P.L. 105-277

**The Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, Pub. L. 105-277, Division C,
Title I, Section 151, to be codified at 5 U.S.C. 3345-3349d**

SEC. 151. FEDERAL VACANCIES AND APPOINTMENTS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE.*-This section may be cited as the "Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998".

(b) *IN GENERAL.*-Chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking sections 3345 through 3349 and inserting the following:

"§3345. Acting officer

"(a) If an officer of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting Office) whose appointment to office is required to be made by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, dies, resigns, or is otherwise unable to perform the functions and duties of the office-

"(1) the first assistant to the office of such officer shall perform the functions and duties of the office temporarily in an acting capacity subject to the time limitations of section 3346;

"(2) notwithstanding paragraph (1), the President (and only the President) may direct a person who serves in an office for which appointment is required to be made by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to perform the functions and duties of the vacant office temporarily in an acting capacity subject to the time limitations of section 3346; or

"(3) notwithstanding paragraph (1), the President (and only the President) may direct an officer or employee of such Executive agency to perform the

functions and duties of the vacant office temporarily in an acting capacity, subject to the time limitations of section 3346, if-

"(A) during the 365-day period preceding the date of death, resignation, or beginning of inability to serve of the applicable officer, the officer or employee served in a position in such agency for not less than 90 days; and

"(B) the rate of pay for the position described under subparagraph (A) is equal to or greater than the minimum rate of pay payable for a position at GS-15 of the General Schedule.

"(b)(1) Notwithstanding subsection (a)(1), a person may not serve as an acting officer for an office under this section, if-

"(A) during the 365-day period preceding the date of the death, resignation, or beginning of inability to serve, such person-

"(i) did not serve in the position of first assistant to the office of such officer; or

"(ii) served in the position of first assistant to the office of such officer for less than 90 days; and

"(B) the President submits a nomination of such person to the Senate for appointment to such office.

"(2) Paragraph (1) shall not apply to any person if

"(A) such person is serving as the first assistant to the office of an officer described under subsection (a);

"(B) the office of such first assistant is an office for which appointment is required to be made by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate; and

"(C) the Senate has approved the appointment of such person to such office.

"(c)(1) Notwithstanding subsection (a)(1), the President (and only the President) may direct an officer who is nominated by the President for reappointment for an additional term to the same office in an Executive department without a break in service, to continue to serve in that office subject to the time limitations in section 3346, until such time as the Senate has acted to confirm or reject the nomination, notwithstanding adjournment sine die.

"(2) For purposes of this section and sections 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349, 3349a, and 3349d, the expiration of a term of office is an inability to perform the functions and duties of such office.

"§3346. Time limitation

"(a) Except in the case of a vacancy caused by sickness, the person serving as an acting officer as described under section 3345 may serve in the office-

"(1) for no longer than 210 days beginning on the date the vacancy occurs;

or

"(2) subject to subsection (b), once a first or second nomination for the office is submitted to the Senate, from the date of such nomination for the period that the nomination is pending in the Senate.

"(b) (1) If the first nomination for the office is rejected by the Senate, withdrawn, or returned to the President by the Senate, the person may continue to serve as the acting officer for no more than 210 days after the date of such rejection, withdrawal, or return.

"(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if a second nomination for the office is submitted to the Senate after the rejection, withdrawal, or return of the first nomination, the person serving as the acting officer may continue to serve-

"(A) until the second nomination is confirmed; or

"(B) for no more than 210 days after the second nomination is rejected, withdrawn, or returned.

"(c) If a vacancy occurs during an adjournment of the Congress sine die, the 210-day period under subsection (a) shall begin on the date that the Senate first reconvenes. "

§3347 Exclusivity

"(a) Sections 3345 and 3346 are the exclusive means for temporarily authorizing an acting official to perform the functions and duties of any office of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting Office,) for which appointment is required to be made by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, unless-

"(1) a statutory provision expressly-

"(A) authorizes the President, a court, or the head of an Executive department to designate an officer or employee to perform the functions and duties of a specified office temporarily in an acting capacity; or

"(B) designates an officer or employee to perform the functions and duties of a specified office temporarily in an acting capacity; or "(2) the President makes an appointment to fill a vacancy in such office during the recess of the Senate pursuant to clause 3 of section 2 of article II of the United States Constitution.

"(b) Any statutory provision providing general authority to the head of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting Office) to delegate duties statutorily vested in that agency head to, or to reassign duties among, officers or employees of such Executive agency, is not a statutory provision to which subsection (a)(2) applies.

"§3348. Vacant office

"(a) In this section-

"(1) the term 'action' includes any agency action as defined under section 551(13); and

"(2) the term 'function or duty' means any function or duty of the applicable office that-

"(A) (i) is established by statute; and

"(ii) is required by statute to be performed by the applicable officer (and only that officer); or

"(B)(i)(I) is established by regulation; and

"(II) is required by such regulation to be performed by the applicable officer (and only that officer); and

"(ii) includes a function or duty to which clause (i) (I) and (II) applies, and the applicable regulation is in effect at any time during the 180-day period preceding the date on which the vacancy occurs.

"(b) Unless an officer or employee is performing the functions and duties in accordance with sections 3345, 3346, and 3347, if an officer of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting Office) whose appointment to office is required to be made by the

President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, dies, resigns, or is otherwise unable to perform the functions and duties of the Office-

"(1) the, office shall remain vacant; and

"(2) in the case of an office other than the office of the head of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting Office), only the head of such Executive agency may perform any function or duty of such office.

"(c) If the last day of any 210-day period under section 3346 is a day on which the Senate is not in session, the second day the Senate is next in session and receiving nominations shall be deemed to be the last day of such period.

"(d) (1) An action taken by any person who is not acting under section 3345, 3346, or 3347, or as provided by subsection (b), in the performance of any function or duty of a vacant office to which this section and sections 3346, 3347, 3349, 3349a, 3349b, and 3349c apply shall have no force or effect.

"(2) An action that has no force or effect under paragraph (1) may not be ratified.

"(e) This section shall not apply to-

"(1) the General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board;

"(2) the General Counsel of the Federal Labor Relations Authority;

"(3) any Inspector General appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate;

"(4) any Chief Financial Officer appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate; or

"(5) an office of an Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting office) if a statutory provision

expressly prohibits the head of the Executive agency from performing the functions and duties of such office.

"§3349. Reporting of vacancies

"(a) The head of each Executive agency (including the Executive Office of the President, and other than the General Accounting office) shall submit to the Comptroller General of the United States and to each House of Congress-

"(1) notification of a vacancy in an office to which this section and sections 3345, 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349a, 3349b, 3349c, and 3349d apply and the date such vacancy occurred immediately upon the occurrence of the vacancy;

"(2) the name of any person serving in an acting capacity and the date such service began immediately upon the designation,

"(3) the name of any person nominated to the Senate to fill the vacancy and the date such nomination is submitted immediately upon the submission of the nomination; and

"(4)" the date of a rejection, withdrawal, or return of any nomination immediately upon such rejection, withdrawal, or return.

"(b) If the Comptroller General of the United States makes a determination that an officer is serving longer than the 210-day period including the applicable exceptions to such period under section 3346 or section 3349a, the Comptroller General shall report such determination immediately to—

"(1) the Committee on Governmental Affairs of the Senate;

"(2) the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight of the House of Representatives;

"(3) the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and House of Representatives;

"(4) the appropriate committees of jurisdiction of the Senate and House of Representatives;

"(5) the President; and

"(6) the Office of Personnel Management.

"§3349a. Presidential inaugural transitions

"(a) In this section, the term 'transitional inauguration day' means the date on which any person swears or affirms the oath of office as President, if such person is not the President on the date preceding the date of swearing or affirming such oath of office.

"(b) With respect to any vacancy that exists during the 60-day period beginning on a transitional inauguration day, the 210-day period under section 3346 or 3348 shall be deemed to begin on the later of the date occurring—

"(1) 90 days after such transitional inauguration day; or

"(2) 90 days after the date on which the vacancy occurs.

"§3349b. Holdover provisions

"Sections 3345 through 3349a shall not be construed to affect any statute that authorizes a person to continue to serve in any office-

"(1) after the expiration of the term for which such person is appointed;

and

"(2) until a successor is appointed or a specified period of time has expired.

"§3349c. Exclusion of certain officers

"Sections 3345 through 3349b shall not apply to-

"(1) any member who is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate to any board, commission, or similar entity that-

"(A) is composed of multiple members; and

"(B) governs an independent establishment or Government corporation;

"(2) any commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission;

"(3) any member of the Surface Transportation Board; or

"(4) any judge appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to a court constituted under article I of the United States Constitution.

"§3349d. Notification of intent to nominate during certain recesses or adjournments

"(a) The submission to the Senate, during a recess or adjournment of the Senate in excess of 15 days, of a written notification by the President of the President's intention to submit a nomination after the recess or adjournment shall be considered a nomination for purposes of sections 3345 through 3349c if such notification contains the name of the proposed nominee and the office for which the person is nominated.

"(b) If the President does not submit a nomination of the person named under subsection (a) within 2 days after the end of such recess or adjournment, effective after such second day the notification considered a nomination under subsection (a) shall be treated as a withdrawn nomination for purposes of sections 3345 through 3349c.

(c) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT

(1) *TABLE OF SECTIONS.*-The table of sections for chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking the matter relating to subchapter III and inserting the following:

**"SUBCHAPTER III-DETAILS, VACANCIES, AND
APPOINTMENTS**

- "3341. *Details; within Executive or military departments.*
- "[3342. *Repealed.*]
- "3343. *Details; to international organization.*
- "3344. *Details; administrative law judges.*
- "3345. *Acting officer.*
- "3346. *Time limitation.*
- "3347. *Exclusivity.*
- "3348. *Vacant office.*
- "3349. *Reporting of vacancies.*
- "3349a. *Presidential inaugural transitions.*
- "3349b. *Holdover provisions relating to certain independent establishments.*
- "3349c. *Exclusion of certain officers.*
- "3349d. *Notification of intent to nominate during certain recesses or adjournments.*

(2) *SUBCHAPTER HEADING.*-The subchapter heading for subchapter III of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"SUBCHAPTER III-DETAILS, VACANCIES, AND APPOINTMENTS".

(d) *EFFECTIVE DATE AND APPLICATION -*

(1) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*-Subject to paragraph (2), this section and the amendments made by this section shall take effect 30 days after the date of enactment of this section.

(2) *APPLICATION.*-

(A) *IN GENERAL.*-This section shall apply to any office that becomes vacant after the effective date of this section.

(B) *IMMEDIATE APPLICATION OF TIME LIMITATION.*-
Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), for any office vacant on the effective date of this section, the time limitations under section 3346 of title 5, United States Code (as amended by this section) shall apply to such office. Such time

limitations shall apply as though such office first became vacant on the effective date of this section.

(C) CERTAIN NOMINATIONS.-If the President submits to the Senate the nomination of any person after the effective date of this section for an office for which such person had been nominated before such date, the next nomination of such person after such date shall be considered a first nomination of such person to that office for purposes of sections 3345 through 3349 and section 3349d of title 5, United States Code (as amended by this section).