

## § 1.550

### RELEASE OF INFORMATION FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RECORDS OTHER THAN CLAIMANT RECORDS

NOTE: Sections 1.550 through 1.559 concern the availability and release of information from files, records, reports, and other papers and documents in Department of Veterans Affairs custody other than those pertaining to claims under any of the laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. As to the release of information from Department of Veterans Affairs claimant records, see §§1.500 through 1.527. Section 1.550 series implement the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552.

[40 FR 12656, Mar. 20, 1975]

AUTHORITY: Sections 1.550 to 1.559 issued under 72 Stat. 1114; 38 U.S.C. 501.

#### § 1.550 General.

The Department of Veterans Affairs policy is one of disclosure of information from agency records to the extent permitted by law. This includes the release of information which the Department of Veterans Affairs is authorized to withhold under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) (see §1.554) if it is determined: (a) By the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Deputy Secretary that disclosure of such information will serve a useful purpose or (b) by an administration, staff office, or field facility head or designee under §1.556(a) that disclosure will not adversely affect the proper conduct of official business or constitute an invasion of personal privacy.

[40 FR 12656, Mar. 20, 1975]

#### § 1.551 [Reserved]

#### § 1.552 Public access to information that affects the public when not published in the Federal Register as constructive notice.

(a) All final orders in such actions as entertained by the Contract Appeals Board, those statements of policy and interpretations adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs but not published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, and administrative manuals and staff instructions that affect any member of the public, unless promptly published and copies offered for sale, will be kept currently indexed by the office of primary program responsibility or the Manager, Administrative Services, as determined by the Secretary or des-

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ignee. Such index or indexes or supplements thereto will be promptly published, quarterly or more frequently, and distributed (by sale or otherwise) unless the Department of Veterans Affairs determines by order published in the FEDERAL REGISTER that publication would be unnecessary and impracticable, in which case the Department of Veterans Affairs will nonetheless provide copies of such index or indexes or supplements thereto on request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication. Both the index and the materials indexed as required by this paragraph will be made available to the public, for inspection and copying. Public reading facilities for this purpose will be maintained in Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office and Department of Veterans Affairs field facilities, open to the public during the normal duty hours of the office in which located. Orders made in the adjudication of individual claims under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs are confidential and privileged by statute (38 U.S.C. 5701) and so are exempt from this requirement.

(b) The voting records of the Contract Appeals Board will be maintained in a public reading facility in the Office of the Board in Central Office and made available to the public upon request.

(c) When publishing or making available to the public any opinion, order, statement of policy, interpretation, staff manual or instruction to staff, identifying details will be deleted, and the deletion justified in writing, to the extent required to prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

(d) No final order, opinion, statement of policy, interpretation, staff manual or instruction which is issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, that affects any member of the public may be relied upon, used, or cited as precedent against any private party unless it has been indexed and either made available or published as provided in this section or unless that private party shall have actual and timely notice of the terms thereof.

[32 FR 10850, July 25, 1967, as amended at 40 FR 12657, Mar. 20, 1975]