



Recommendation 86-6

Petitions for Rulemaking

(Adopted December 4, 1986)

The Administrative Procedure Act (APA) requires each federal agency to give interested persons the right to petition for the issuance, amendment, or repeal of a rule, 5 U.S.C. § 553(e). The APA also requires that agencies conclude matters presented to them within a reasonable time, 5 U.S.C. § 555(b), and give prompt notice of the denial of actions requested by interested persons, 5 U.S.C. § 555(e). The APA does not specify the procedures agencies must follow in receiving, considering, or disposing of public petitions for rulemaking.¹ However, agencies are expected to establish and publish such procedures in accordance with the public information section of the APA. *See* Attorney General's Manual on the Administrative Procedure Act 38 (1947). An Administrative Conference study of agency rulemaking petition procedures and practices found that while most agencies with rulemaking power have established some procedures governing petitions for rulemaking, few agencies have established sound practices in dealing with petitions or responded promptly to such petitions.

This Recommendation sets forth the basic procedures that the Conference believes should be incorporated into agency procedural rules governing petitions for rulemaking. In addition, the Conference encourages agencies to adopt certain other procedures and policies where appropriate and feasible. The Conference feels that, beyond this basic level, uniform specification of agency petition procedures would be undesirable because there are significant differences in the number and nature of petitions received by agencies and in the degree of sophistication of each agency's community of interested persons.

Agencies should review their rulemaking petition procedures and practices and, in accordance with this Recommendation, adopt measures that will ensure that the right to petition is a meaningful one. The existence of the right to petition reflects the value Congress has placed on public participation in the agency rulemaking process. The Administrative Conference has recognized, in past recommendations, the benefits flowing from public

¹ But other statutes expressly create the right to petition for rulemaking, and some of these statutes specify procedures to be followed in the petitioning process.



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participation in agency rulemaking and from publication of the means for such participation.² The absence of published petition procedures, excessive or rigidly-enforced format requirements, and the failure to act promptly on petitions for rulemaking may undermine the public's right to file petitions for rulemaking.

Some agencies currently have petition-for-rulemaking procedures that are more elaborate than those recommended in this Recommendation. This Recommendation is not intended to express a judgment that such procedures are inappropriate or that the statutes mandating particular procedures should be amended. Nor is the Recommendation intended to alter the prior position of the Conference recommending elimination of the categorical exemptions of certain types of rulemaking from the APA's rulemaking requirements. See Recommendations 69-8 and 73-5. To the extent Congress or agencies adopt those recommendations, they should also expressly apply the right to petition to those types of rulemaking.

Recommendation

1. Agencies should establish by rule basic procedures for the receipt, consideration, and prompt disposition of petitions for rulemaking. These basic procedures should include: (a) Specification of the address(es) for the filing of petitions and an outline of the recommended contents of the petition, such as the name, address, and telephone number of the petitioner, the statutory authority for the action requested, and a description of the rule to be issued, amended, or repealed; (b) maintenance of a publicly available petition file; and (c) provision for prompt notification to the petitioner of the action taken on the petition, with a summary explanatory statement.

2. In addition, agencies should, where appropriate and feasible:

a. make their petition procedures expressly applicable to all types of rules the agency has authority to adopt;

² See Recommendation 69-8, *Elimination of Certain Exemptions from the APA Rulemaking Requirements*, 1 CFR § 305.69-8; Recommendation 71-6, *Public Participation in Administrative Hearings*, 1 CFR § 305.71-6; Recommendation 73-5, *Elimination of the "Military or Foreign Affairs Function" Exemption from APA Rulemaking Requirements*, 1 CFR § 305.73-5; Recommendation 76-5, *Interpretive Rules of General Applicability and Statements of General Policy*, 1 CFR § 305.76-5; and Recommendation 83-2, *The "Good Cause" Exemption from APA Rulemaking Requirements*, 1 CFR § 305.83-2.



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b. provide guidance on the type of data, argumentation, or other information the agency needs to consider petitions;

c. develop effective methods for providing notice to interested persons that a petition has been filed and identify the agency office or official to whom inquiries and comments should be made; and

d. establish internal management controls to assure the timely processing of petitions for rulemaking, including deadlines for completing interim actions and reaching conclusions on petitions and systems to monitor compliance with those deadlines.

Citations:

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