

**Excerpts from H.R. Rep. 110-259 (2007) (Conf. Rep.)
relating to
employee protection - sections 1413, 1521 and 1536**

110TH CONGRESS }
1st Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPORT
110-259

IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE 9/11 COMMISSION ACT OF 2007

CONFERENCE REPORT

TO ACCOMPANY

H.R. 1



JULY 25, 2007.—Ordered to be printed

IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9/11
COMMISSION ACT OF 2007

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Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, from the Committee on Conference,
submitted the following

CONFERENCE REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 1]

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1), to provide for the implementation of the recommendations of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses as follows:

That the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted by the Senate amendment, insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) *SHORT TITLE.*—*This Act may be cited as the “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007”.*

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SEC. 1413. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEE PROTECTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—A public transportation agency, a contractor or a subcontractor of such agency, or an officer or employee of such agency, shall not discharge, demote, suspend, reprimand, or in any

other way discriminate against an employee if such discrimination is due, in whole or in part, to the employee's lawful, good faith act done, or perceived by the employer to have been done or about to be done—

(1) to provide information, directly cause information to be provided, or otherwise directly assist in any investigation regarding any conduct which the employee reasonably believes constitutes a violation of any Federal law, rule, or regulation relating to public transportation safety or security, or fraud, waste, or abuse of Federal grants or other public funds intended to be used for public transportation safety or security, if the information or assistance is provided to or an investigation stemming from the provided information is conducted by—

(A) a Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency (including an office of the Inspector General under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.; Public Law 95-452);

(B) any Member of Congress, any Committee of Congress, or the Government Accountability Office; or

(C) a person with supervisory authority over the employee or such other person who has the authority to investigate, discover, or terminate the misconduct;

(2) to refuse to violate or assist in the violation of any Federal law, rule, or regulation relating to public transportation safety or security;

(3) to file a complaint or directly cause to be brought a proceeding related to the enforcement of this section or to testify in that proceeding;

(4) to cooperate with a safety or security investigation by the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the National Transportation Safety Board; or

(5) to furnish information to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, or any Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency as to the facts relating to any accident or incident resulting in injury or death to an individual or damage to property occurring in connection with public transportation.

(b) **HAZARDOUS SAFETY OR SECURITY CONDITIONS.**—(1) A public transportation agency, or a contractor or a subcontractor of such agency, or an officer or employee of such agency, shall not discharge, demote, suspend, reprimand, or in any other way discriminate against an employee for—

(A) reporting a hazardous safety or security condition;

(B) refusing to work when confronted by a hazardous safety or security condition related to the performance of the employee's duties, if the conditions described in paragraph (2) exist; or

(C) refusing to authorize the use of any safety- or security-related equipment, track, or structures, if the employee is responsible for the inspection or repair of the equipment, track, or structures, when the employee believes that the equipment, track, or structures are in a hazardous safety or security condition, if the conditions described in paragraph (2) of this subsection exist.

(2) A refusal is protected under paragraph (1)(B) and (C) if—

(A) *the refusal is made in good faith and no reasonable alternative to the refusal is available to the employee;*

(B) *a reasonable individual in the circumstances then confronting the employee would conclude that—*

(i) *the hazardous condition presents an imminent danger of death or serious injury; and*

(ii) *the urgency of the situation does not allow sufficient time to eliminate the danger without such refusal; and*

(C) *the employee, where possible, has notified the public transportation agency of the existence of the hazardous condition and the intention not to perform further work, or not to authorize the use of the hazardous equipment, track, or structures, unless the condition is corrected immediately or the equipment, track, or structures are repaired properly or replaced.*

(3) *In this subsection, only subsection (b)(1)(A) shall apply to security personnel, including transit police, employed or utilized by a public transportation agency to protect riders, equipment, assets, or facilities.*

(c) **ENFORCEMENT ACTION.**—

(1) **FILING AND NOTIFICATION.**—*A person who believes that he or she has been discharged or otherwise discriminated against by any person in violation of subsection (a) or (b) may, not later than 180 days after the date on which such violation occurs, file (or have any person file on his or her behalf) a complaint with the Secretary of Labor alleging such discharge or discrimination. Upon receipt of a complaint filed under this paragraph, the Secretary of Labor shall notify, in writing, the person named in the complaint and the person's employer of the filing of the complaint, of the allegations contained in the complaint, of the substance of evidence supporting the complaint, and of the opportunities that will be afforded to such person under paragraph (2).*

(2) **INVESTIGATION; PRELIMINARY ORDER.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—*Not later than 60 days after the date of receipt of a complaint filed under paragraph (1) and after affording the person named in the complaint an opportunity to submit to the Secretary of Labor a written response to the complaint and an opportunity to meet with a representative of the Secretary of Labor to present statements from witnesses, the Secretary of Labor shall conduct an investigation and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the complaint has merit and notify, in writing, the complainant and the person alleged to have committed a violation of subsection (a) or (b) of the Secretary of Labor's findings. If the Secretary of Labor concludes that there is a reasonable cause to believe that a violation of subsection (a) or (b) has occurred, the Secretary of Labor shall accompany the Secretary of Labor's findings with a preliminary order providing the relief prescribed by paragraph (3)(B). Not later than 30 days after the date of notification of findings under this paragraph, either the person alleged to have committed the violation or the complainant may file objections to the findings or preliminary order, or both, and request a hearing on the record. The fil-*

ing of such objections shall not operate to stay any reinstatement remedy contained in the preliminary order. Such hearings shall be conducted expeditiously. If a hearing is not requested in such 30-day period, the preliminary order shall be deemed a final order that is not subject to judicial review.

(B) REQUIREMENTS.—

(i) REQUIRED SHOWING BY COMPLAINANT.—The Secretary of Labor shall dismiss a complaint filed under this subsection and shall not conduct an investigation otherwise required under subparagraph (A) unless the complainant makes a *prima facie* showing that any behavior described in subsection (a) or (b) was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint.

(ii) SHOWING BY EMPLOYER.—Notwithstanding a finding by the Secretary of Labor that the complainant has made the showing required under clause (i), no investigation otherwise required under paragraph (A) shall be conducted if the employer demonstrates, by clear and convincing evidence, that the employer would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of that behavior.

(iii) CRITERIA FOR DETERMINATION BY SECRETARY OF LABOR.—The Secretary of Labor may determine that a violation of subsection (a) or (b) has occurred only if the complainant demonstrates that any behavior described in subsection (a) or (b) was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint.

(iv) PROHIBITION.—Relief may not be ordered under paragraph (A) if the employer demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the employer would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of that behavior.

(3) FINAL ORDER.—

(A) DEADLINE FOR ISSUANCE; SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of conclusion of a hearing under paragraph (2), the Secretary of Labor shall issue a final order providing the relief prescribed by this paragraph or denying the complaint. At any time before issuance of a final order, a proceeding under this subsection may be terminated on the basis of a settlement agreement entered into by the Secretary of Labor, the complainant, and the person alleged to have committed the violation.

(B) REMEDY.—If, in response to a complaint filed under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Labor determines that a violation of subsection (a) or (b) has occurred, the Secretary of Labor shall order the person who committed such violation to—

- (i) take affirmative action to abate the violation;
- and
- (ii) provide the remedies described in subsection (d).

(C) *ORDER.*—If an order is issued under subparagraph (B), the Secretary of Labor, at the request of the complainant, shall assess against the person against whom the order is issued a sum equal to the aggregate amount of all costs and expenses (including attorney and expert witness fees) reasonably incurred, as determined by the Secretary of Labor, by the complainant for, or in connection with, bringing the complaint upon which the order was issued.

(D) *FRIVOLOUS COMPLAINTS.*—If the Secretary of Labor finds that a complaint under paragraph (1) is frivolous or has been brought in bad faith, the Secretary of Labor may award to the prevailing employer reasonable attorney fees not exceeding \$1,000.

(4) *REVIEW.*—

(A) *APPEAL TO COURT OF APPEALS.*—Any person adversely affected or aggrieved by an order issued under paragraph (3) may obtain review of the order in the United States Court of Appeals for the circuit in which the violation, with respect to which the order was issued, allegedly occurred or the circuit in which the complainant resided on the date of such violation. The petition for review must be filed not later than 60 days after the date of the issuance of the final order of the Secretary of Labor. Review shall conform to chapter 7 of title 5, United States Code. The commencement of proceedings under this subparagraph shall not, unless ordered by the court, operate as a stay of the order.

(B) *LIMITATION ON COLLATERAL ATTACK.*—An order of the Secretary of Labor with respect to which review could have been obtained under subparagraph (A) shall not be subject to judicial review in any criminal or other civil proceeding.

(5) *ENFORCEMENT OF ORDER BY SECRETARY OF LABOR.*—Whenever any person has failed to comply with an order issued under paragraph (3), the Secretary of Labor may file a civil action in the United States district court for the district in which the violation was found to occur to enforce such order. In actions brought under this paragraph, the district courts shall have jurisdiction to grant all appropriate relief including, but not limited to, injunctive relief and compensatory damages.

(6) *ENFORCEMENT OF ORDER BY PARTIES.*—

(A) *COMMENCEMENT OF ACTION.*—A person on whose behalf an order was issued under paragraph (3) may commence a civil action against the person to whom such order was issued to require compliance with such order. The appropriate United States district court shall have jurisdiction, without regard to the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties, to enforce such order.

(B) *ATTORNEY FEES.*—The court, in issuing any final order under this paragraph, may award costs of litigation (including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees) to any party whenever the court determines such award is appropriate.

(7) *DE NOVO REVIEW.*—With respect to a complaint under paragraph (1), if the Secretary of Labor has not issued a final

decision within 210 days after the filing of the complaint and if the delay is not due to the bad faith of the employee, the employee may bring an original action at law or equity for de novo review in the appropriate district court of the United States, which shall have jurisdiction over such an action without regard to the amount in controversy, and which action shall, at the request of either party to such action, be tried by the court with a jury. The action shall be governed by the same legal burdens of proof specified in paragraph (2)(B) for review by the Secretary of Labor.

(d) REMEDIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—An employee prevailing in any action under subsection (c) shall be entitled to all relief necessary to make the employee whole.

(2) DAMAGES.—Relief in an action under subsection (c) (including an action described in (c)(7)) shall include—

(A) reinstatement with the same seniority status that the employee would have had, but for the discrimination;

(B) any backpay, with interest; and

(C) compensatory damages, including compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney fees.

(3) POSSIBLE RELIEF.—Relief in any action under subsection (c) may include punitive damages in an amount not to exceed \$250,000.

(e) ELECTION OF REMEDIES.—An employee may not seek protection under both this section and another provision of law for the same allegedly unlawful act of the public transportation agency.

(f) NO PREEMPTION.—Nothing in this section preempts or diminishes any other safeguards against discrimination, demotion, discharge, suspension, threats, harassment, reprimand, retaliation, or any other manner of discrimination provided by Federal or State law.

(g) RIGHTS RETAINED BY EMPLOYEE.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any employee under any Federal or State law or under any collective bargaining agreement. The rights and remedies in this section may not be waived by any agreement, policy, form, or condition of employment.

(h) DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITY.—

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, or with the written consent of the employee, the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security may not disclose the name of an employee who has provided information described in subsection (a)(1).

(2) The Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security shall disclose to the Attorney General the name of an employee described in paragraph (1) of this subsection if the matter is referred to the Attorney General for enforcement. The Secretary making such disclosure shall provide reasonable advance notice to the affected employee if disclosure of that person's identity or identifying information is to occur.

(i) PROCESS FOR REPORTING SECURITY PROBLEMS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.—

(1) *ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCESS.*—The Secretary shall establish through regulations after an opportunity for notice and comment, and provide information to the public regarding, a process by which any person may submit a report to the Secretary regarding public transportation security problems, deficiencies, or vulnerabilities.

(2) *ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT.*—If a report submitted under paragraph (1) identifies the person making the report, the Secretary shall respond promptly to such person and acknowledge receipt of the report.

(3) *STEPS TO ADDRESS PROBLEM.*—The Secretary shall review and consider the information provided in any report submitted under paragraph (1) and shall take appropriate steps to address any problems or deficiencies identified.

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SEC. 1521. RAILROAD EMPLOYEE PROTECTIONS.

Section 20109 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read:

“SEC. 20109. EMPLOYEE PROTECTIONS.

“(a) *IN GENERAL.*—A railroad carrier engaged in interstate or foreign commerce, a contractor or a subcontractor of such a railroad carrier, or an officer or employee of such a railroad carrier, may not discharge, demote, suspend, reprimand, or in any other way discriminate against an employee if such discrimination is due, in whole or in part, to the employee’s lawful, good faith act done, or perceived by the employer to have been done or about to be done—

“(1) to provide information, directly cause information to be provided, or otherwise directly assist in any investigation regarding any conduct which the employee reasonably believes constitutes a violation of any Federal law, rule, or regulation relating to railroad safety or security, or gross fraud, waste, or abuse of Federal grants or other public funds intended to be used for railroad safety or security, if the information or assistance is provided to or an investigation stemming from the provided information is conducted by—

“(A) a Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency (including an office of the Inspector General under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.; Public Law 95–452);

“(B) any Member of Congress, any committee of Congress, or the Government Accountability Office; or

“(C) a person with supervisory authority over the employee or such other person who has the authority to investigate, discover, or terminate the misconduct;

“(2) to refuse to violate or assist in the violation of any Federal law, rule, or regulation relating to railroad safety or security;

“(3) to file a complaint, or directly cause to be brought a proceeding related to the enforcement of this part or, as applicable to railroad safety or security, chapter 51 or 57 of this title, or to testify in that proceeding;

“(4) to notify, or attempt to notify, the railroad carrier or the Secretary of Transportation of a work-related personal injury or work-related illness of an employee;

“(5) to cooperate with a safety or security investigation by the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the National Transportation Safety Board;

“(6) to furnish information to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, or any Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency as to the facts relating to any accident or incident resulting in injury or death to an individual or damage to property occurring in connection with railroad transportation; or

“(7) to accurately report hours on duty pursuant to chapter 211.

“(b) HAZARDOUS SAFETY OR SECURITY CONDITIONS.—(1) A railroad carrier engaged in interstate or foreign commerce, or an officer or employee of such a railroad carrier, shall not discharge, demote, suspend, reprimand, or in any other way discriminate against an employee for—

“(A) reporting, in good faith, a hazardous safety or security condition;

“(B) refusing to work when confronted by a hazardous safety or security condition related to the performance of the employee’s duties, if the conditions described in paragraph (2) exist; or

“(C) refusing to authorize the use of any safety-related equipment, track, or structures, if the employee is responsible for the inspection or repair of the equipment, track, or structures, when the employee believes that the equipment, track, or structures are in a hazardous safety or security condition, if the conditions described in paragraph (2) exist.

“(2) A refusal is protected under paragraph (1)(B) and (C) if—

“(A) the refusal is made in good faith and no reasonable alternative to the refusal is available to the employee;

“(B) a reasonable individual in the circumstances then confronting the employee would conclude that—

“(i) the hazardous condition presents an imminent danger of death or serious injury; and

“(ii) the urgency of the situation does not allow sufficient time to eliminate the danger without such refusal; and

“(C) the employee, where possible, has notified the railroad carrier of the existence of the hazardous condition and the intention not to perform further work, or not to authorize the use of the hazardous equipment, track, or structures, unless the condition is corrected immediately or the equipment, track, or structures are repaired properly or replaced.

“(3) In this subsection, only paragraph (1)(A) shall apply to security personnel employed by a railroad carrier to protect individuals and property transported by railroad.

“(c) ENFORCEMENT ACTION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—An employee who alleges discharge, discipline, or other discrimination in violation of subsection (a) or (b) of this section, may seek relief in accordance with the provisions of this section, with any petition or other request for relief under this section to be initiated by filing a complaint with the Secretary of Labor.

“(2) PROCEDURE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Any action under paragraph (1) shall be governed under the rules and procedures set forth in section 42121(b), including:

“(i) BURDENS OF PROOF.—Any action brought under (c)(1) shall be governed by the legal burdens of proof set forth in section 42121(b).

“(ii) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—An action under paragraph (1) shall be commenced not later than 180 days after the date on which the alleged violation of subsection (a) or (b) of this section occurs.

“(iii) *CIVIL ACTIONS TO ENFORCE.*—If a person fails to comply with an order issued by the Secretary of Labor pursuant to the procedures in section 42121(b), the Secretary of Labor may bring a civil action to enforce the order in the district court of the United States for the judicial district in which the violation occurred, as set forth in 42121.

“(B) *EXCEPTION.*—Notification made under section 42121(b)(1) shall be made to the person named in the complaint and the person’s employer.

“(3) *DE NOVO REVIEW.*—With respect to a complaint under paragraph (1), if the Secretary of Labor has not issued a final decision within 210 days after the filing of the complaint and if the delay is not due to the bad faith of the employee, the employee may bring an original action at law or equity for de novo review in the appropriate district court of the United States, which shall have jurisdiction over such an action without regard to the amount in controversy, and which action shall, at the request of either party to such action, be tried by the court with a jury.

“(4) *APPEALS.*—Any person adversely affected or aggrieved by an order issued pursuant to the procedures in section 42121(b), may obtain review of the order in the United States court of appeals for the circuit in which the violation, with respect to which the order was issued, allegedly occurred or the circuit in which the complainant resided on the date of such violation. The petition for review must be filed not later than 60 days after the date of the issuance of the final order of the Secretary of Labor. The review shall conform to chapter 7 of title 5. The commencement of proceedings under this paragraph shall not, unless ordered by the court, operate as a stay of the order.

“(d) *REMEDIES.*—

“(1) *IN GENERAL.*—An employee prevailing in any action under subsection (c) shall be entitled to all relief necessary to make the employee whole.

“(2) *DAMAGES.*—Relief in an action under subsection (c) (including an action described in subsection (c)(3)) shall include—

“(A) reinstatement with the same seniority status that the employee would have had, but for the discrimination;

“(B) any backpay, with interest; and

“(C) compensatory damages, including compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney fees.

“(3) *POSSIBLE RELIEF.*—Relief in any action under subsection (c) may include punitive damages in an amount not to exceed \$250,000.

“(e) *ELECTION OF REMEDIES.*—An employee may not seek protection under both this section and another provision of law for the same allegedly unlawful act of the railroad carrier.

“(f) *NO PREEMPTION.*—Nothing in this section preempts or diminishes any other safeguards against discrimination, demotion, discharge, suspension, threats, harassment, reprimand, retaliation,

or any other manner of discrimination provided by Federal or State law.

“(g) **RIGHTS RETAINED BY EMPLOYEE.**—Nothing in this section shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any employee under any Federal or State law or under any collective bargaining agreement. The rights and remedies in this section may not be waived by any agreement, policy, form, or condition of employment.

“(h) **DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITY.**—

“(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, or with the written consent of the employee, the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security may not disclose the name of an employee of a railroad carrier who has provided information about an alleged violation of this part or, as applicable to railroad safety or security, chapter 51 or 57 of this title, or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those provisions.

“(2) The Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security shall disclose to the Attorney General the name of an employee described in paragraph (1) if the matter is referred to the Attorney General for enforcement. The Secretary making such disclosures shall provide reasonable advance notice to the affected employee if disclosure of that person’s identity or identifying information is to occur.

“(i) **PROCESS FOR REPORTING SECURITY PROBLEMS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.**—

“(1) **ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCESS.**—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall establish through regulations, after an opportunity for notice and comment, a process by which any person may report to the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding railroad security problems, deficiencies, or vulnerabilities.

“(2) **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT.**—If a report submitted under paragraph (1) identifies the person making the report, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall respond promptly to such person and acknowledge receipt of the report.

“(3) **STEPS TO ADDRESS PROBLEM.**—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall review and consider the information provided in any report submitted under paragraph (1) and shall take appropriate steps to address any problems or deficiencies identified.”.

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SEC. 1536. MOTOR CARRIER EMPLOYEE PROTECTIONS.

Section 31105 of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read:

“(a) PROHIBITIONS.—(1) A person may not discharge an employee, or discipline or discriminate against an employee regarding pay, terms, or privileges of employment, because—

“(A)(i) the employee, or another person at the employee’s request, has filed a complaint or begun a proceeding related to a violation of a commercial motor vehicle safety or security regulation, standard, or order, or has testified or will testify in such a proceeding; or

“(ii) the person perceives that the employee has filed or is about to file a complaint or has begun or is about to begin a proceeding related to a violation of a commercial motor vehicle safety or security regulation, standard, or order;

“(B) the employee refuses to operate a vehicle because—

“(i) the operation violates a regulation, standard, or order of the United States related to commercial motor vehicle safety, health, or security; or

“(ii) the employee has a reasonable apprehension of serious injury to the employee or the public because of the vehicle’s hazardous safety or security condition;

“(C) the employee accurately reports hours on duty pursuant to chapter 315;

“(D) the employee cooperates, or the person perceives that the employee is about to cooperate, with a safety or security investigation by the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the National Transportation Safety Board; or

“(E) the employee furnishes, or the person perceives that the employee is or is about to furnish, information to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, or any Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency as to the facts relating to any accident or incident resulting in injury or death to an individual or damage to property occurring in connection with commercial motor vehicle transportation.

“(2) Under paragraph (1)(B)(ii) of this subsection, an employee’s apprehension of serious injury is reasonable only if a reasonable individual in the circumstances then confronting the employee would conclude that the hazardous safety or security condition establishes a real danger of accident, injury, or serious impairment to health. To qualify for protection, the employee must have sought from the employer, and been unable to obtain, correction of the hazardous safety or security condition.

“(b) FILING COMPLAINTS AND PROCEDURES.—(1) An employee alleging discharge, discipline, or discrimination in violation of subsection (a) of this section, or another person at the employee’s request, may file a complaint with the Secretary of Labor not later than 180 days after the alleged violation occurred. All complaints initiated under this section shall be governed by the legal burdens of proof set forth in section 42121(b). On receiving the complaint, the Secretary of Labor shall notify, in writing, the person alleged to have committed the violation of the filing of the complaint.

“(2)(A) Not later than 60 days after receiving a complaint, the Secretary of Labor shall conduct an investigation, decide whether it is reasonable to believe the complaint has merit, and notify, in writing, the complainant and the person alleged to have committed the

violation of the findings. If the Secretary of Labor decides it is reasonable to believe a violation occurred, the Secretary of Labor shall include with the decision findings and a preliminary order for the relief provided under paragraph (3) of this subsection.

“(B) Not later than 30 days after the notice under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, the complainant and the person alleged to have committed the violation may file objections to the findings or preliminary order, or both, and request a hearing on the record. The filing of objections does not stay a reinstatement ordered in the preliminary order. If a hearing is not requested within the 30 days, the preliminary order is final and not subject to judicial review.

“(C) A hearing shall be conducted expeditiously. Not later than 120 days after the end of the hearing, the Secretary of Labor shall issue a final order. Before the final order is issued, the proceeding may be ended by a settlement agreement made by the Secretary of Labor, the complainant, and the person alleged to have committed the violation.

“(3)(A) If the Secretary of Labor decides, on the basis of a complaint, a person violated subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary of Labor shall order the person to—

“(i) take affirmative action to abate the violation;

“(ii) reinstate the complainant to the former position with the same pay and terms and privileges of employment; and

“(iii) pay compensatory damages, including backpay with interest and compensation for any special damages sustained as a result of the discrimination, including litigation costs, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney fees.

“(B) If the Secretary of Labor issues an order under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph and the complainant requests, the Secretary of Labor may assess against the person against whom the order is issued the costs (including attorney fees) reasonably incurred by the complainant in bringing the complaint. The Secretary of Labor shall determine the costs that reasonably were incurred.

“(C) Relief in any action under subsection (b) may include punitive damages in an amount not to exceed \$250,000.

“(c) *DE NOVO REVIEW*.—With respect to a complaint under paragraph (1), if the Secretary of Labor has not issued a final decision within 210 days after the filing of the complaint and if the delay is not due to the bad faith of the employee, the employee may bring an original action at law or equity for de novo review in the appropriate district court of the United States, which shall have jurisdiction over such an action without regard to the amount in controversy, and which action shall, at the request of either party to such action, be tried by the court with a jury.

“(d) *JUDICIAL REVIEW AND VENUE*.—A person adversely affected by an order issued after a hearing under subsection (b) of this section may file a petition for review, not later than 60 days after the order is issued, in the court of appeals of the United States for the circuit in which the violation occurred or the person resided on the date of the violation. Review shall conform to chapter 7 of title 5. The review shall be heard and decided expeditiously. An order of the Secretary of Labor subject to review under this subsection is not subject to judicial review in a criminal or other civil proceeding.

“(e) *CIVIL ACTIONS TO ENFORCE.*—If a person fails to comply with an order issued under subsection (b) of this section, the Secretary of Labor shall bring a civil action to enforce the order in the district court of the United States for the judicial district in which the violation occurred.

“(f) *NO PREEMPTION.*—Nothing in this section preempts or diminishes any other safeguards against discrimination, demotion, discharge, suspension, threats, harassment, reprimand, retaliation, or any other manner of discrimination provided by Federal or State law.

“(g) *RIGHTS RETAINED BY EMPLOYEE.*—Nothing in this section shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any employee under any Federal or State law or under any collective bargaining agreement. The rights and remedies in this section may not be waived by any agreement, policy, form, or condition of employment.

“(h) *DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITY.*—

“(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, or with the written consent of the employee, the Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security may not disclose the name of an employee who has provided information about an alleged violation of this part, or a regulation prescribed or order issued under any of those provisions.

“(2) The Secretary of Transportation or the Secretary of Homeland Security shall disclose to the Attorney General the name of an employee described in paragraph (1) of this subsection if the matter is referred to the Attorney General for enforcement. The Secretary making such disclosure shall provide reasonable advance notice to the affected employee if disclosure of that person’s identity or identifying information is to occur.

“(i) *PROCESS FOR REPORTING SECURITY PROBLEMS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.*—

“(1) *ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCESS.*—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall establish through regulations, after an opportunity for notice and comment, a process by which any person may report to the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding motor carrier vehicle security problems, deficiencies, or vulnerabilities.

“(2) *ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT.*—If a report submitted under paragraph (1) identifies the person making the report, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall respond promptly to such person and acknowledge receipt of the report.

“(3) *STEPS TO ADDRESS PROBLEM.*—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall review and consider the information provided in any report submitted under paragraph (1) and shall take appropriate steps to address any problems or deficiencies identified.

“(j) *DEFINITION.*—In this section, ‘employee’ means a driver of a commercial motor vehicle (including an independent contractor when personally operating a commercial motor vehicle), a mechanic, a freight handler, or an individual not an employer, who—

“(1) directly affects commercial motor vehicle safety or security in the course of employment by a commercial motor carrier; and

“(2) is not an employee of the United States Government, a State, or a political subdivision of a State acting in the course of employment.”

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JOINT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE OF
CONFERENCE

The managers on the part of the House and the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1), to provide for the implementation of the recommendations of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, submit the following joint statement to the House and the Senate in explanation of the effect of the action agreed upon by the managers and recommended in the accompanying conference report:

The Senate amendment struck all of the House bill after the enacting clause and inserted a substitute text.

The House recedes from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate with an amendment that is a substitute for the House bill and the Senate amendment. The differences between the House bill, the Senate amendment, and the substitute agreed to in conference are noted below, except for clerical corrections, conforming changes made necessary by agreements reached by the conferees, and minor drafting and clarifying changes.

JOINT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

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Section 1413. Whistleblower protection

There is no comparable House provision.

The Senate bill modifies existing whistleblower protections for rail employees.

The Conference substitute adopts protections for public transportation employee whistleblowers, modeled on the protections available to railroad employees under 49 U.S.C. 20109 as amended by this Act and aviation employees under 49 U.S.C. 42121.

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Section 1521. Railroad employee protections

There is no comparable House provision.

Section 1430 of the Senate bill updates the existing railroad employee protections statute to protect railroad employees from adverse employment impacts due to whistleblower activities related to rail security. The provision precludes railroad carriers from discharging, or otherwise discriminating against, a railroad employee because the employee, or the employee's representative: provided, caused to be provided, or is about to provide, to the employer or the Federal government information relating to a reasonably perceived threat to security; provided, caused to be provided, or is about to provide testimony before a Federal or State proceeding; or refused to violate or assist in violation of any law or regulation related to rail security.

The Conference substitute adopts a modified version of the Senate language. It modifies the railroad carrier employee whistleblower provisions and expands the protected acts of employees, including refusals to authorize the use of safety-related equipment, track or structures that are in a hazardous condition. Additionally, the Conference substitute enhances administrative and civil remedies for employees, similar to those in subsection 42121(b) of title 49, United States Code. The language also provides for de novo review of a complaint in Federal District Court if the Department of Labor does not timely issue an order related to the complaint. The Conference substitute also raises the cap on punitive damages that could be awarded under this provision from \$20,000 to \$250,000.

The Conference notes that railroad carrier employees must be protected when reporting a safety or security threat or refusing to work when confronted by a hazardous safety or security condition to enhance the oversight measures that improve transparency and accountability of the railroad carriers. The Conference, through this provision, intends to protect covered employees in the course of their ordinary duties. The intent of this provision is to ensure that employees can report their concerns without the fear of possible retaliation or discrimination from employers.

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Section 1536. Motor carrier employee protections

There is no comparable House provision.

Section 1430 of the Senate bill updates the existing railroad employee protections statute to protect railroad employees from adverse employment impacts due to whistleblower activities related to rail security.

The Conference substitute adopts a provision related to the Senate provision which expands whistleblower protections to motor carrier, including over-the-road bus, employees. It amends the cur-

rent motor carrier employee whistleblower provision for safety to include whistleblower protections and increase employee protections related to security. This provision prohibits motor carriers from discriminating against or discharging any employee who reports a safety or security threat, or who refuses to work when confronted by a hazardous safety or security conditions. The Conference substitute also provides employees with additional administrative and civil remedies, including *de novo* review of a complaint in Federal District Court if the Department of Labor does not issue an order related to the complaint in a timely fashion. It authorizes all relief necessary to make a whistleblower whole, including damages, reinstatement with prior seniority status, special damages, and attorneys' fees. Punitive damages are also made available to employees in an amount not to exceed \$250,000.

The Conference believes that motor carrier, including over-the-road bus, employees must be protected when reporting a safety or security threat or refusing to work when confronted by a hazardous safety or security condition. The Conference, through this provision, intends to protect covered employees in the course of their ordinary duties. The intent of this provision is to ensure that employees can report their concerns without the fear of possible retaliation or discrimination from employers.

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