



Issue Date: 11 March 2020

CASE NO. 2019-SOX-00007

In the Matter of:

JOSE RAMON BLANCO,
Claimant

v.

ROBERT HALF INTERNATIONAL INC.,¹
Respondent.

**ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT AND DISMISSING COMPLAINT WITH
PREJUDICE**

The hearing in the above-captioned matter was scheduled for February 13 and 14, 2019, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in Dallas, Texas. Pursuant to the parties request and based upon the representations that a settlement was imminent, I canceled the scheduled hearing and directed the parties to submit for approval the final settlement agreement on or before February 21, 2020. On February 21, 2020, the parties submitted for approval a Joint Motion to Approve Settlement together with a fully executed Confidential Settlement Agreement and General Release.

This matter arises under the employee protection provisions of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX), 18 U.S.C. §1514A, and its implementing regulations found at 29 C.F.R. Part 1980. The regulations permit voluntary settlements if the administrative law judge approves, and the administrative law judge's approval constitutes the final order of the Secretary and may be enforced as such. 29 C.F.R. §§1980.111(d)(2), 1980.113.

All parties were represented by counsel and each party has executed the settlement agreement acknowledging their agreement to its terms and conditions. I have reviewed the terms and conditions of the settlement, including the confidentiality provisions, and find the provisions are fair, adequate and not contrary to the public interest. The settlement contemplates the dismissal of all claims in this proceeding with prejudice. To the extent that the Settlement Agreement contains provisions related to actions by the Complainant or Respondent under other statutes other than SOX, this Order makes no determination regarding those matters. My authority is limited to those statutes that are within the jurisdiction of the Office of Administrative Law Judges as set forth in the applicable statute. Accordingly, my approval of

¹ The name of the Respondent appears in the case caption as corrected by this Order Approving Settlement Agreement. Specifically, the name has been corrected from Robert Half International, Inc. to Robert Half International Inc.

this settlement is limited to the terms of the Settlement Agreement relating solely to the Complainant's SOX claim.

The parties have agreed to keep the specific terms of the agreement confidential, subject to applicable laws. To effectuate the confidentiality of the agreement, I will have the settlement agreement sealed. However, notwithstanding the confidentiality of the agreement, the parties' submissions, including the settlement agreement, become part of the record of the case and thus, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).² If a FOIA request is made, the Department of Labor will be required to respond and decide whether to exercise any applicable exemption from disclosure.

Having carefully reviewed and considered the terms of the Confidential Settlement Agreement, I find as follows:

1. The settlement agreement appears on its face to be fair and reasonable and to effectuate the purposes and policies of SOX;
2. The Complainant's request to withdraw all claims made under SOX is deemed to be a waiver of the right to any further proceedings before the U.S. Department of Labor regarding the matters which are the subject of the settlement agreement;
3. The Order shall become effective immediately upon my approval of the settlement and shall have the same force and effect as one made after a full hearing on the merits, and
4. To the extent permissible under FOIA and consistent with the terms of the agreed-upon settlement, the terms of this agreement are considered confidential but as noted may be subject to disclosure under FIOA.

ORDER

Based upon the foregoing and in accordance with the Confidential Settlement Agreement and General Release, it is hereby **ORDERED** that the settlement is **APPROVED** and that the above-captioned complaint is **DISMISSED** with prejudice.

SO ORDERED.

PATRICIA J. DAUM
Administrative Law Judge

² 5 U.S.C. §522(a).