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United States Code Service - Titles 1 through 54 > TITLE 15. COMMERCE AND TRADE > CHAPTER 2. FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION; PROMOTION OF EXPORT TRADE AND PREVENTION OF UNFAIR METHODS OF COMPETITION > FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

§ 45. Unfair methods of competition unlawful; prevention by Commission **[Caution: See prospective amendment note below.]**

- (a) Declaration of unlawfulness; power to prohibit unfair practices; inapplicability to foreign trade.
- (1) Unfair methods of competition in or affecting commerce, and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce, are hereby declared unlawful.
 - (2) The Commission is hereby empowered and directed to prevent persons, partnerships, or corporations, except banks, savings and loan institutions described in section 18(f)(3) [15 USCS § 57a(f)(3)], Federal credit unions described in section 18(f)(4) [15 USCS § 57a(f)(4)], common carriers subject to the Acts to regulate commerce, air carriers and foreign air carriers subject to the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 [49 USCS §§ 40101 et seq.], and persons, partnerships, or corporations insofar as they are subject to the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, as amended [7 USCS §§ 181 et seq.], except as provided in section 406(b) of said Act [7 USCS § 227(b)], from using unfair methods of competition in or affecting commerce and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce.
 - (3) This subsection shall not apply to unfair methods of competition involving commerce with foreign nations (other than import commerce) unless--
 - (A) such methods of competition have a direct, substantial, and reasonably foreseeable effect--
 - (i) on commerce which is not commerce with foreign nations, or on import commerce with foreign nations; or
 - (ii) on export commerce with foreign nations, of a person engaged in such commerce in the United States; and
 - (B) such effect gives rise to a claim under the provisions of this subsection, other than this paragraph. If this subsection applies to such methods of competition only because of the operation of subparagraph (A)(ii), this subsection shall apply to such conduct only for injury to export business in the United States.
 - (4) (A) For purposes of subsection (a), the term 'unfair or deceptive acts or practices' includes such acts or practices involving foreign commerce that--
 - (i) cause or are likely to cause reasonably foreseeable injury within the United States; or
 - (ii) involve material conduct occurring within the United States.

(B) All remedies available to the Commission with respect to unfair and deceptive acts or practices shall be available for acts and practices described in this paragraph, including restitution to domestic or foreign victims.
- (b) Proceeding by Commission; modifying and setting aside orders. Whenever the Commission shall have reason to believe that any such person, partnership, or corporation has been or is using any unfair method of competition or unfair or deceptive act or practice in or affecting commerce, and if it shall appear to the Commission that a proceeding by it in respect thereof would be to the interest of the public, it shall issue

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and serve upon such person, partnership, or corporation a complaint stating its charges in that respect and containing a notice of a hearing upon a day and at a place therein fixed at least thirty days after the service of said complaint. The person, partnership, or corporation so complained of shall have the right to appear at the place and time so fixed and show cause why an order should not be entered by the Commission requiring such person, partnership, or corporation to cease and desist from the violation of the law so charged in said complaint. Any person, partnership, or corporation may make application, and upon good cause shown may be allowed by the Commission to intervene and appear in said proceeding by counsel or in person. The testimony in any such proceeding shall be reduced to writing and filed in the office of the Commission. If upon such hearing the Commission shall be of the opinion that the method of competition or the act or practice in question is prohibited by this Act, it shall make a report in writing in which it shall state its findings as to the facts and shall issue and cause to be served on such person, partnership, or corporation an order requiring such person, partnership, or corporation to cease and desist from using such method of competition or such act or practice. Until the expiration of the time allowed for filing a petition for review, if no such petition has been duly filed within such time, or, if a petition for review has been filed within such time then until the record in the proceeding has been filed in a court of appeals of the United States, as hereinafter provided, the Commission may at any time, upon such notice and in such manner as it shall deem proper, modify or set aside, in whole or in part, any report or any order made or issued by it under this section. After the expiration of the time allowed for filing a petition for review, if no such petition has been duly filed within such time, the Commission may at any time, after notice and opportunity for hearing, reopen and alter, modify, or set aside, in whole or in part, any report or order made or issued by it under this section, whenever in the opinion of the Commission conditions of fact or of law have so changed as to require such action or if the public interest shall so require, except that (1) the said person, partnership, or corporation may, within sixty days after the service upon him or it of said report or order entered after such a reopening, obtain a review thereof in the appropriate court of appeals of the United States, in the manner provided in subsection (c) of this section; and (2) in the case of an order, the Commission shall reopen any such order to consider whether such order (including any affirmative relief provision contained in such order) should be altered, modified, or set aside, in whole or in part, if the person, partnership, or corporation involved files a request with the Commission which makes a satisfactory showing that changed conditions of law or fact require such order to be altered, modified, or set aside, in whole or in part. The Commission shall determine whether to alter, modify, or set aside any order of the Commission in response to a request made by a person, partnership, or corporation under paragraph [clause] (2) not later than 120 days after the date of the filing of such request.

- (c) Review of order; rehearing. Any person, partnership, or corporation required by an order of the Commission to cease and desist from using any method of competition or act or practice may obtain a review of such order in the [circuit] court of appeals of the United States, within any circuit where the method of competition or the act or practice in question was used or where such person, partnership, or corporation resides or carries on business, by filing in the court, within sixty days from the date of the service of such order, a written petition praying that the order of the Commission be set aside. A copy of such petition shall be forthwith transmitted by the clerk of the court to the Commission, and thereupon the Commission shall file in the court the record in the proceeding, as provided in section 2112 of title 28, United States Code. Upon such filing of the petition the court shall have jurisdiction of the proceeding and of the question determined therein concurrently with the Commission until the filing of the record and shall have power to make and enter a decree affirming, modifying, or setting aside the order of the Commission, and enforcing the same to the extent that such order is affirmed and to issue such writs as are ancillary to its jurisdiction or are necessary in its judgment to prevent injury to the public or to competitors pendente lite. The findings of the Commission as to the facts, if supported by evidence, shall be conclusive. To the extent that the order of the Commission is affirmed, the court shall thereupon issue its own order commanding obedience to the terms of such order of the Commission. If either party shall apply to the court for leave to adduce additional evidence, and shall show to the satisfaction of the court that such additional evidence is material and that there were reasonable grounds for the failure to adduce such evidence in the proceeding before the Commission, the court may order such additional evidence to be taken before the Commission and to be adduced upon the hearing in such manner and upon such terms

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and conditions as to the court may seem proper. The Commission may modify its findings as to the facts, or make new findings, by reason of the additional evidence so taken, and it shall file such modified or new findings, which, if supported by evidence, shall be conclusive, and its recommendation, if any, for the modification or setting aside of its original order, with the return of such additional evidence. The judgment and decree of the court shall be final, except that the same shall be subject to review by the Supreme Court upon certiorari, as provided in section 240 of the Judicial Code [28 USCS § 1254].

- (d)** Jurisdiction of court. Upon the filing of the record with it the jurisdiction of the [circuit] court of appeals of the United States to affirm, enforce, modify, or set aside orders of the Commission shall be exclusive.
- (e)** Extension from liability. No order of the Commission or judgment of court to enforce the same shall in anywise relieve or absolve any person, partnership, or corporation from any liability under the Antitrust Acts.
- (f)** Service of complaints, orders and other processes; return. Complaints, orders, and other processes of the Commission under this section may be served by anyone duly authorized by the Commission, either (a) by delivering a copy thereof to the person to be served, or to a member of the partnership to be served, or the president, secretary, or other executive officer or a director of the corporation to be served; or (b) by leaving a copy thereof at the residence or the principal office or place of business of such person, partnership, or corporation; or (c) by mailing a copy thereof by registered mail or by certified mail addressed to such person, partnership, or corporation at his or its residence or principal office or place of business. The verified return by the person so serving said complaint, order, or other process setting forth the manner of said service shall be proof of the same, and the return post office receipt for said complaint, order, or other process mailed by registered mail or by certified mail as aforesaid shall be proof of the service of the same.
- (g)** Finality of order. An order of the Commission to cease and desist shall become final--

 - (1)** Upon the expiration of the time allowed for filing a petition for review, if no such petition has been duly filed within such time; but the Commission may thereafter modify or set aside its order to the extent provided in the last sentence of subsection (b).
 - (2)** Except as to any order provision subject to paragraph (4), upon the sixtieth day after such order is served, if a petition for review has been duly filed; except that any such order may be stayed, in whole or in part and subject to such conditions as may be appropriate, by--

 - (A)** the Commission;
 - (B)** an appropriate court of appeals of the United States, if (i) a petition for review of such order is pending in such court, and (ii) an application for such a stay was previously submitted to the Commission and the Commission, within the 30-day period beginning on the date the application was received by the Commission, either denied the application or did not grant or deny the application; or
 - (C)** the Supreme Court, if an applicable petition for certiorari is pending.
 - (3)** For purposes of subsection (m)(1)(B) and of section 19(a)(2) [15 USCS § 57b(a)(2)], if a petition for review of the order of the Commission has been filed--

 - (A)** upon the expiration of the time allowed for filing a petition for certiorari, if the order of the Commission has been affirmed or the petition for review has been dismissed by the court of appeals and no petition for certiorari has been duly filed;
 - (B)** upon the denial of a petition for certiorari, if the order of the Commission has been affirmed or the petition for review has been dismissed by the court of appeals; or
 - (C)** upon the expiration of 30 days from the date of issuance of a mandate of the Supreme Court directing that the order of the Commission be affirmed or the petition for review be dismissed.

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- (4) In the case of an order provision requiring a person, partnership, or corporation to divest itself of stock, other share capital, or assets, if a petition for review of such order of the Commission has been filed--
- (A) upon the expiration of the time allowed for filing a petition for certiorari, if the order of the Commission has been affirmed or the petition for review has been dismissed by the court of appeals and no petition for certiorari has been duly filed;
 - (B) upon the denial of a petition for certiorari, if the order of the Commission has been affirmed or the petition for review has been dismissed by the court of appeals; or
 - (C) upon the expiration of 30 days from the date of issuance of a mandate of the Supreme Court directing that the order of the Commission be affirmed or the petition for review be dismissed.
- (h) Modification or setting aside of order by Supreme Court. If the Supreme Court directs that the order of the Commission be modified or set aside, the order of the Commission rendered in accordance with the mandate of the Supreme Court shall become final upon the expiration of thirty days from the time it was rendered, unless within such thirty days either party has instituted proceedings to have such order corrected to accord with the mandate, in which event the order of the Commission shall become final when so corrected.
- (i) Modification or setting aside of order by Court of Appeals. If the order of the Commission is modified or set aside by the [circuit] court of appeals, and if (1) the time allowed for filing a petition for certiorari has expired and no such petition has been duly filed, or (2) the petition for certiorari has been denied, or (3) the decision of the court has been affirmed by the Supreme Court, then the order of the Commission rendered in accordance with the mandate of the court of appeals shall become final on the expiration of thirty days from the time such order of the Commission was rendered, unless within such thirty days either party has instituted proceedings to have such order corrected so that it will accord with the mandate, in which event the order of the Commission shall become final when so corrected.
- (j) Rehearing upon order or remand. If the Supreme Court orders a rehearing; or if the case is remanded by the [circuit] court of appeals to the Commission for a rehearing, and if (1) the time allowed for filing a petition for certiorari has expired, and no such petition has been duly filed, or (2) the petition for certiorari has been denied, or (3) the decision of the court has been affirmed by the Supreme Court, then the order of the Commission rendered upon such rehearing shall become final in the same manner as though no prior order of the Commission had been rendered.
- (k) "Mandate" defined. As used in this section the term "mandate," in case a mandate has been recalled prior to the expiration of thirty days from the date of issuance thereof, means the final mandate.
- (l) Penalty for violation of order; injunctions and other appropriate equitable relief. Any person, partnership, or corporation who violates an order of the Commission after it has become final, and while such order is in effect, shall forfeit and pay to the United States a civil penalty of not more than \$ 10,000 for each violation, which shall accrue to the United States and may be recovered in a civil action brought by the Attorney General of the United States. Each separate violation of such an order shall be a separate offense, except that in the case of a violation through continuing failure to obey or neglect to obey a final order of the Commission, each day of continuance of such failure or neglect shall be deemed a separate offense. In such actions, the United States district courts are empowered to grant mandatory injunctions and such other and further equitable relief as they deem appropriate in the enforcement of such final orders of the Commission.
- (m) Civil actions for recovery of penalties for knowing violations of rules and cease and desist orders respecting unfair or deceptive acts or practices; jurisdiction; maximum amount of penalties; continuing violations; de novo determinations; compromise or settlement procedure.
- (1) (A) The Commission may commence a civil action to recover a civil penalty in a district court of the United States against any person, partnership, or corporation which violates any rule under this Act respecting unfair or deceptive acts or practices (other than an interpretive rule or a rule violation of which the Commission has provided is not an unfair or deceptive act or practice in violation of

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subsection (a)(1)) with actual knowledge or knowledge fairly implied on the basis of objective circumstances that such act is unfair or deceptive and is prohibited by such rule. In such action, such person, partnership, or corporation shall be liable for a civil penalty of not more than \$ 10,000 for each violation.

- (B)** If the Commission determines in a proceeding under subsection (b) that any act or practice is unfair or deceptive, and issues a final cease and desist order, other than a consent order, with respect to such act or practice, then the Commission may commence a civil action to obtain a civil penalty in a district court of the United States against any person, partnership, or corporation which engages in such act or practice--
- (1)** after such cease and desist order becomes final (whether or not such person, partnership, or corporation was subject to such cease and desist order), and
 - (2)** with actual knowledge that such act or practice is unfair or deceptive and is unlawful under subsection (a)(1) of this section.
In such action, such person, partnership, or corporation shall be liable for a civil penalty of not more than \$ 10,000 for each violation.
 - (C)** In the case of a violation through continuing failure to comply with a rule or with section 5(a)(1) [subsec. (a)(1) of this section], each day of continuance of such failure shall be treated as a separate violation, for purposes of subparagraphs (A) and (B). In determining the amount of such a civil penalty, the court shall take into account the degree of culpability, any history of prior such conduct, ability to pay, effect on ability to continue to do business, and such other matters as justice may require.
 - (2)** If the cease and desist order establishing that the act or practice is unfair or deceptive was not issued against the defendant in a civil penalty action under paragraph (1)(B) the issues of fact in such action against such defendant shall be tried de novo. Upon request of any party to such an action against such defendant, the court shall also review the determination of law made by the Commission in the proceeding under subsection (b) that the act or practice which was the subject of such proceeding constituted an unfair or deceptive act or practice in violation of subsection (a).
 - (3)** The Commission may compromise or settle any action for a civil penalty if such compromise or settlement is accompanied by a public statement of its reasons and is approved by the court.
 - (n)** Definition of unfair acts or practices. The Commission shall have no authority under this section or section 18 [15 USCS § 57a] to declare unlawful an act or practice on the grounds that such act or practice is unfair unless the act or practice causes or is likely to cause substantial injury to consumers which is not reasonably avoidable by consumers themselves and not outweighed by countervailing benefits to consumers or to competition. In determining whether an act or practice is unfair, the Commission may consider established public policies as evidence to be considered with all other evidence. Such public policy considerations may not serve as a primary basis for such determination.

History

(Sept. 26, 1914, ch 311, § 5, 38 Stat. 719; Mar. 21, 1938, ch 49, § 3, 52 Stat. 111; June 23, 1938, ch 601, Title XI, § 1107(f), 52 Stat. 1028; Mar. 16, 1950, ch 61, § 4(c), 64 Stat. 21; July 14, 1952, ch 745, § 2, 66 Stat. 632; Aug. 23, 1958, P.L. 85-726, Title XIV, § 1411, 72 Stat. 809; Aug. 28, 1958, P.L. 85-791, § 3, 72 Stat. 942; Sept. 2, 1958, P.L. 85-909, § 3, 72 Stat. 1750; June 11, 1960, P.L. 86-507, § 1(13), 74 Stat. 200; Nov. 16, 1973, P.L. 93-153, Title IV, § 408(c), (d), 87 Stat. 591, 592; Jan. 4, 1975, P.L. 93-637, Title II, §§ 201(a), 204(b), 205(a), 88 Stat. 2193, 2200; Dec. 12, 1975, P.L. 94-145, § 3, 89 Stat. 801; July 23, 1979, P.L. 96-37, § 1(a), 93 Stat. 95; May 28, 1980, P.L. 96-252, § 2, 94 Stat. 374; Oct. 8, 1982, P.L. 97-290, Title IV, § 403, 96 Stat. 1246; Nov. 8, 1984, P.L. 98-620, Title IV, Subtitle A, § 402(12), 98 Stat. 3358; Aug. 10, 1987, P.L. 100-86, Title VII, § 715(a)(1), 101 Stat. 655.)

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(As amended Aug. 26, 1994, P.L. 103-312, §§ 4, 6, 9, 108 Stat. 1691, 1692, 1695; Dec. 22, 2006, P.L. 109-455, § 3, 120 Stat. 3372.)

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