§31101 DEFINITIONS

In this subchapter—

(1) “commercial motor vehicle” means (except in section 31106) a self-propelled or towed vehicle used on the highways in commerce principally to transport passengers or cargo, if the vehicle—

(A) has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of at least 10,001 pounds, whichever is greater;

(B) is designed to transport more than 10 passengers including the driver; or

(C) is used in transporting material found by the Secretary of Transportation to be hazardous under section 5103 of this title and transported in a quantity requiring placarding under regulations prescribed by the Secretary under section 5103.

(2) “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—

(A) directly affects commercial motor vehicle safety in the course of employment by a commercial motor carrier; and

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

(3) “employer”—

(A) means a person engaged in a business affecting commerce that owns or leases a commercial motor vehicle in connection with that business, or assigns an employee to operate the vehicle in commerce; but

(B) does not include the Government, a State, or a political subdivision of a State.

(4) “State” means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

§31102 GRANTS TO STATES

(a) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—Subject to this section and the availability of amounts, the Secretary of Transportation may make grants to States for the development or implementation of programs for improving motor carrier safety and the enforcement of regulations, standards, and orders of the United States Government on commercial motor vehicle safety, hazardous materials transportation safety, and compatible State regulations, standards, and orders.

(b) STATE PLAN PROCEDURES AND CONTENTS.—

(1) The Secretary shall prescribe procedures for a State to submit a plan under which the State agrees to assume responsibility for improving motor carrier safety and to adopt and enforce regulations, standards, and orders of the Government on commercial motor vehicle safety, hazardous materials transportation safety, or compatible State regulations, standards, and orders. The Secretary shall approve the plan if the Secretary decides the plan is adequate to promote the objectives of this section and the plan—

(A) implements performance-based activities, including deployment of technology to

### Historical and Revision Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revised Section</th>
<th>Source (U.S. Code)</th>
<th>Source (Statutes at Large)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Before clause (1), the words “unless the context otherwise requires” are omitted as unnecessary. The text of 49 App. 2301(4) is omitted as unnecessary because of clause (1). The text of 49 App. 2301(6) is omitted as surplus because the complete name of the Secretary of Transportation is used the first time the term appears in a section.

In clause (1), before subclause (A), the words “(except in section 31106)” are added because the source provisions being restated in section 31106 of the revised title contain a definition of “commercial motor vehicle”.

In clause (4), the words “the Commonwealth of” are omitted for consistency in the revised title and with other titles of the United States Code.

### Amendments

1998—Par. (1)(A). Pub. L. 105–178, §403(a)(1), inserted “or gross vehicle weight” after “rating” and substituted “10,001 pounds, whichever is greater” for “10,000 pounds”.

Par. (1)(C). Pub. L. 105–178, §403(a)(2), inserted “and transported in a quantity requiring placarding under regulations prescribed by the Secretary under section 5103” before period at end.

### Savings Clause

Pub. L. 105–178, title IV, §403(k), June 9, 1998, 112 Stat. 396, provided that: “Amendments made by this section [amending this section and sections 31102 to 31104 of this title] shall not affect any funds made available before the date of enactment of this Act (June 9, 1998).”
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.

§ 31105. Employee protections

(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; or

(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, or 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)(i) 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
(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 does not issue 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. An order in the district court of the United States for the circuit in which the violation occurred or the person resided on the date of the violation 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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<td>Jan. 6, 1983, Pub. L. 97–424, §405(a)–(d), 96 Stat. 2157.</td>
</tr>
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<td>31105(b)</td>
<td>49 App. 2305(c)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49 App. 2305(e)</td>
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In subsection (a)(1), before clause (A), the words “in any manner” are omitted as surplus. The word “conditions” is omitted as included in “terms”. In clauses (A) and (B), the word “rule” is omitted as being synonymous with “regulation”. In clause (A), the word “begun” is substituted for “instituted or caused to be instituted” for consistency in the revised title and to eliminate unnecessary words. In clause (B), the words before subclause (i) are substituted for “for refusing to operate a vehicle when” and “or because of” for clarity and consistency. In subclause (ii), the words “vehicle’s unsafe condition” are substituted for “unsafe condition of such equipment” for consistency.

Subsection (a)(2) is substituted for 49 App. 2305(b) and last sentences for clarity and to eliminate unnecessary words.

In subsection (b)(1), the words “alleging such discharge, discipline, or discrimination” are omitted as surplus.

In subsection (b)(2)(B), the words “Not later than 30 days after the notice under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph” are substituted for “Thereafter” and “within thirty days” for clarity.

1 So in original. Probably should be “subsection (b)(d).”
In subsection (b)(2)(C), the words “Before the final order is issued” are substituted for “In the interim” for clarity.

Subsection (b)(3)(A) is substituted for 49 App.:2305(c)(2)(B) (1st sentence) for clarity and to eliminate unnecessary words. In clause (ii), the word “conditions” is omitted as included in “terms”. The provision for back pay is moved from clause (i) to clause (iii) for clarity.

In subsection (b)(3)(B), the words “a sum equal to the aggregate amount of all” and “and expenses” are omitted as surplus. The words “in bringing the complaint” are substituted for “for, or in connection with, the bringing of the complaint upon which the order was issued” for clarity.

In subsection (c), the words “or aggrieved” and “with respect to which the order was issued, allegedly” are omitted as surplus. The words “in accordance with the provisions of chapter 7 of title 5” are omitted because 5 ch. 7 applies unless otherwise stated.

In subsection (d), the text of 49 App.:2305(e) (last sentence) is omitted as unnecessary.

AMENDMENTS

2007—Pub. L. 110–53 amended text of section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to, in subsec. (a), prohibition against discharge or discipline of, or discrimination against, an employee regarding pay, terms, or privileges of employment for certain actions, in subsec. (b), procedures for filing of complaint, in subsec. (c), judicial review and venue, and, in subsec. (d), civil action to enforce an order.

EMPLOYEE PROTECTIONS

Pub. L. 105–178, title IV, § 4023, June 9, 1998, 112 Stat. 415, provided that: “Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act [June 9, 1998], the Secretary [of Transportation], in conjunction with the Secretary of Labor, shall report to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives on the effective date of enactment of this Act [June 9, 1998], the Secretary considers appropriate, including information on the safety fitness of each of the motor carriers and registrants and other information the Secretary considers appropriate, including information on motor carrier, commercial motor vehicle, and driver safety performance data.

(b) PERFORMANCE AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION PROGRAM.—

(1) INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE.—The Secretary shall include, as part of the motor carrier information system authorized by this section, a program to establish and maintain a clearinghouse and repository of information related to State registration and licensing of commercial motor vehicles, the registrants of such vehicles, and the motor carriers operating such vehicles. The clearinghouse and repository may include information on the safety fitness of each of the motor carriers and registrants and other information the Secretary considers appropriate, including information on motor carrier, commercial motor vehicle, and driver safety performance.

(2) DESIGN.—The program shall link Federal motor carrier safety information systems with State commercial vehicle registration and licensing systems and shall be designed to enable a State to—

(A) determine the safety fitness of a motor carrier or registrant when licensing or registering the registrant or motor carrier or while the license or registration is in effect; and

(B) deny, suspend, or revoke the commercial motor vehicle registrations of a motor carrier or registrant that has been issued an operations out-of-service order by the Secretary.

(3) CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary shall require States, as a condition of participation in the program, to—

(A) comply with the uniform policies, procedures, and technical and operational standards prescribed by the Secretary under subsection (a)(4); and

(B) possess or seek the authority to possess for a time period no longer than deter-